weekly Standard

FEBRUARY 7, 2005

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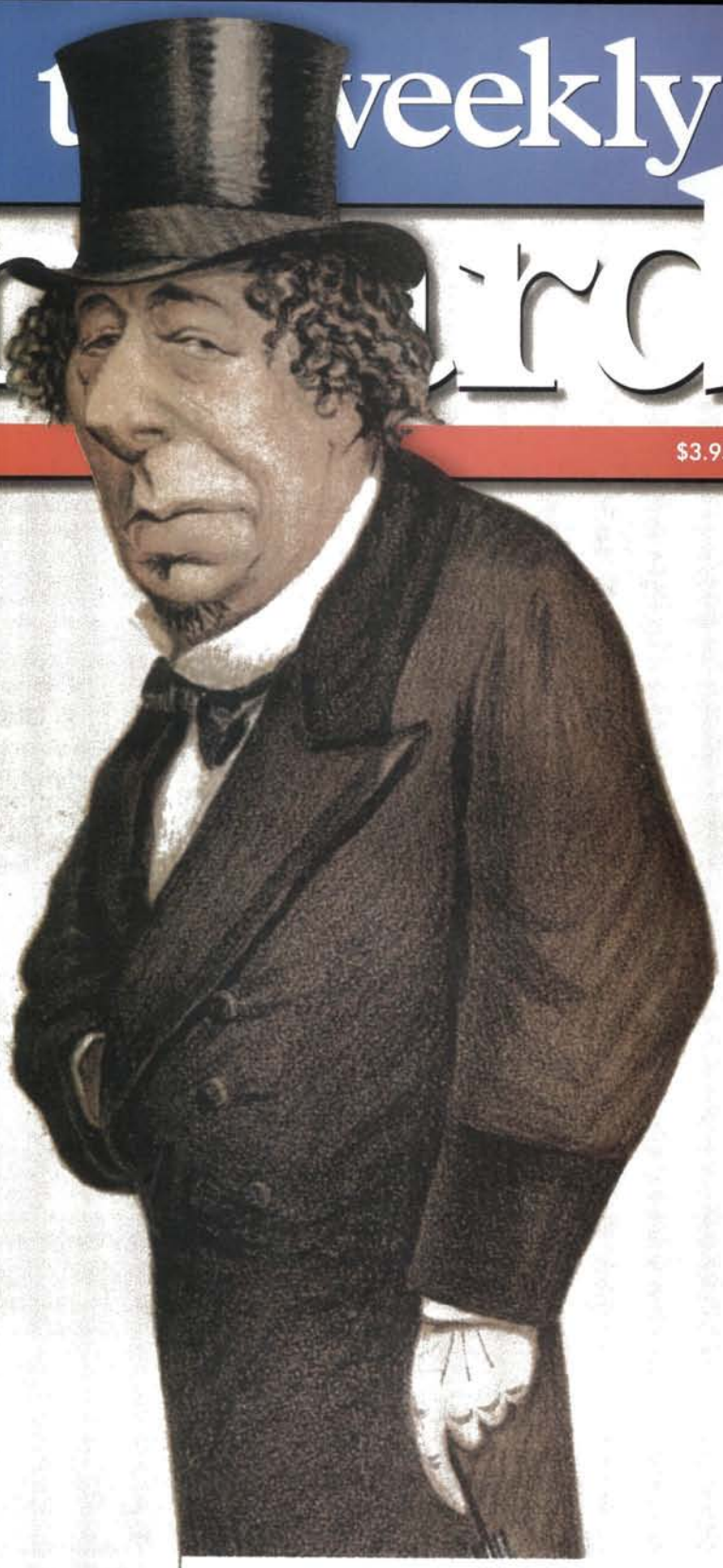
GETTING TO KNOW THE SUFIS
STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

David Gelernter on Benjamin Disraeli, the Inventor of Modern Conservatism



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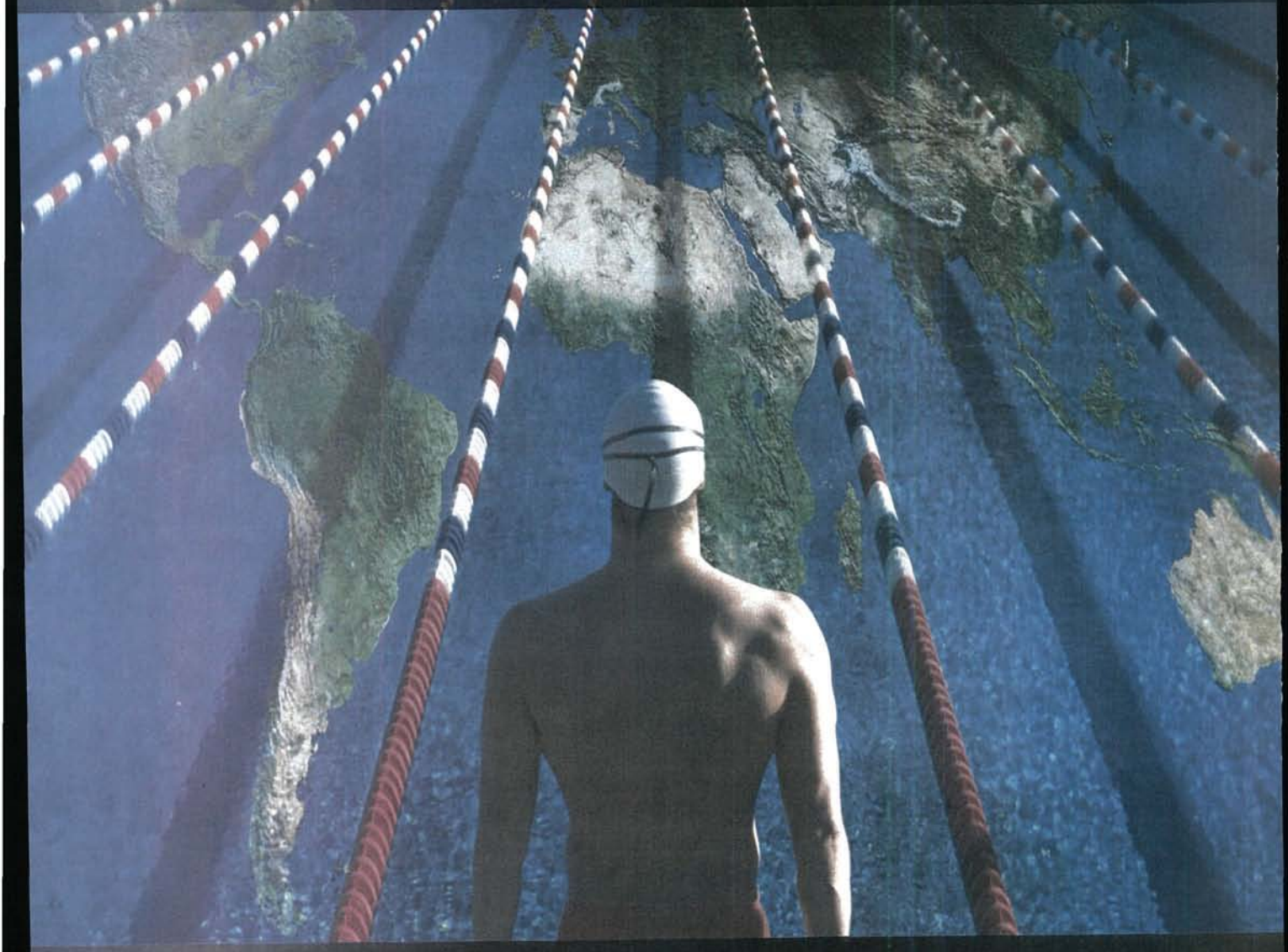

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Sjokkhilsen fra Bush-datter!

Which means, pardon THE SCRAPBOOK's Norwegian, something like "Shocking Greeting from Bush's Daughter"—the reference (by an anonymous headline writer at Norway's online *Nettavisen* newspaper) being to a photo-agency image of President Bush with daughters Jenna and Barbara at the recent Texas-themed "Black Tie and Boots" Inaugural Ball here in Washington. The picture in question captured Jenna Bush innocuously making the "Hook 'Em, Horns" pinky-and-index-finger gesture long associated with the University of Texas football program. But there's apparently a similar bit of Norwegian hand symbology associated, instead, with the late Oystein Aarseth, founder of the occultophile "death-metal" rock band Mayhem. So the *Nettavisen* people decided to have some obviously tongue-in-cheek fun speculating about Jenna Bush's involvement in the transmission of *satantegnet*—"satanic sign language." Inquiring minds want to know, the paper asked: *Hva er det egentlig Jenna Bush driver med?* Or, roughly translated: What's up with the president's devil spawn?

Good question.

Here's a better one, though: What's up with all the American reporters who then picked up this "story" and treated it like something that needed serious debunking? "Norwegians confused by Bush Salute," read the slug on an AP story out of Oslo. That "Hook 'Em, Horns" business, AP explained, "got lost in translation in Norway, where shocked people interpreted [it] as a salute to Satan." Innumerable other U.S. media outlets followed suit, all citing the same *Nettavisen* headline, and each making one or another version of the same, condescending joke—about the ease and speed with which millions of "aghast" and "outraged" Scandinavians had somehow convinced themselves that America's First Family is in secret communion with the underworld. Don't "the Nordics"—as AP weirdly referred to them—know anything about Texas football, fer gosh sakes?

Except that actually, yes, it turns out the Nordics *have* heard of UT's Longhorns, and *do* know what the "Hook 'Em, Horns" sign means, and *don't* for a minute believe that Jenna Bush is a practitioner of witchcraft. And why are we so sure of that? Because we've pulled up "*Sjokkhilsen fra Bush-datter*" off the *Nettavisen* website and we've noticed that reporter Ole Valaker—way up top of the piece, in just his third full sentence—went out of his way to tell Norwegian readers exactly what Miss Jenna's pinky and index fingers really were up to. "*Det kan imidlertid også være at hun prøver å vise symbolet til University of Texas Longhorns*," Valaker wrote.

Never mind. ♦

Who Won Wisconsin?

For now, at least, the official tabulations still show John Kerry having edged out President Bush in Wisconsin last November—by a squeaker-small 11,384-vote statewide margin. But local, state, and federal law enforcement officials last week made two significant announcements indicating that Republican complaints about the fairness of that count are being taken seriously.

First off, on Monday, January 24, came formal felony charges against five former Kerry staffers alleged to have vandalized—and rendered unusable—a 25-vehicle fleet of rented vans the Wisconsin Republican party had intended to drive voters to the polls with on Election Day. Among those implicated in the crime (which carries a maximum penalty of three years in prison and a $10,000 fine): Sowande Omokunde, aka "Supreme Solar Allah," son of U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore; and Michael Pratt, son of longtime local Democratic bigwig Marvin Pratt. Wisconsin Democrats continue to insist that the perpetrators did not act in their capacity as paid employees of the Kerry campaign. But at least one witness has apparently told investigators that Supreme Solar Allah & Co., "dressed in 'Mission Impossible' type gear, black outfits and knit caps, left the Democratic party headquarters at about 3 A.M. on Nov. 2, and returned about 20 minutes later, extremely excited and talking about how they had slashed the tires."

Meanwhile, a multiagency voter-fraud probe was announced last Wednesday by district attorney Michael McCann, U.S. Attorney Steven Biskupic, the FBI, and the Milwaukee police. Government investigators are responding to mounting evidence—an extensive analysis of the November balloting recently published by the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, most notably—that many thousands of unlawful votes were likely cast in Wisconsin's largest (and heavily Democratic) city. Specifically, the *Journal-Sentinel* has established that preelection Republican warnings about sham Democratic registrants were well founded: At least 1,200 presidential ballots were cast last fall from plainly bogus Milwaukee addresses—public parks and baseball fields, for example. And another 8,000-plus ballots appear to have been cast by (or on behalf of) people for whom election authorities have no record whatsoever.

The total number of suspicious Milwaukee votes has been growing larger with every passing week, and seems likely, sooner rather than later, to exceed John Kerry's statewide margin

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of victory. Will that margin survive a federal grand jury investigation? ♦

The Horse Whisperee

To review: In December 2001, a few months after Washington intern Chandra Levy had gone famously missing, *Vanity Fair* "special correspondent" Dominick Dunne went on the Laura Ingraham radio program and told her audience that he'd heard—from an unnamed Arab sheikh by way of an unnamed veterinary psychotherapist—that then-congressman Gary Condit had been a regular guest at Middle Eastern embassy receptions where he and other Washington dignitaries were given prostitutes as party favors. Dunne further suggested—though "I can't vouch for any of this"—that at one such shindig Condit had complained to his hosts about his relationship with Levy, that "she was a clinger," that she wouldn't let him break it off, and that she was threatening him with public embarrassment unless he continued to see her. Levy, Dunne reminded his listeners, "shortly thereafter vanished," having been abducted—according to "what the horse whisperer said"—and then "dropped at sea" from a private airplane.

Mr. Dunne later repeated and embellished this amazing tale in a variety of private and public settings—even claiming, at one point, that he'd been recruited to work on it by the FBI. But the story was false from top to bottom, as Dunne seems now to have admitted in Manhattan's federal district court, where he is the defendant in an ongoing $11 million defamation suit by Condit. No, Dunne conceded to Condit's attorneys last September (according to a videotaped deposition partially leaked to NBC's *Today Show* on January 12), "I did not" at any point possess solid evidence to substantiate the embassy sex-ring theory. And no, as a matter of fact, Dunne hadn't ever really known anything at all about Gary Condit—except that "I found him furtive in appearance," and "I objected to the way he arrived at work, the House, carrying a coat over his shoulder, smiling for the cameras, when a girl, a young woman, whom he knew very well was missing."

Now, we know what you're thinking, here. "I found him furtive in appearance" isn't ordinarily considered sufficient basis for a reputable journalist to implicate a sitting congressman in a murder conspiracy. Mr. Dunne's defense, however? Basically, it's that he isn't really a reputable journalist. "Dominick is more in the nature of a diarist or a raconteur, in the Samuel Pepys tradition," one of his lawyers has argued. "This is not serious investigative reporting."

Good point. ♦

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Casual

The Postman Won't Even Ring Once

"Fred is dead," read the note my wife left on the small table in our front hall on which we leave each other messages. Fred was Fred Austin, our mailman for the better part of the past fifteen years. Three days before I had put a twenty in his hand, as I do every year, instructing him to have a Christmas lunch on me. It's a small enough show of gratitude for many services. "The pleasure's all mine," he said, and then his attention was distracted by a woman entering the lobby asking if he could take care of her mail over the Christmas holiday, while she was off to visit her son.

This was the last I'd heard from Fred. I saw him one more time: in his coffin at a memorial service at Faith Temple Church of God in Christ on Dewey Avenue in Evanston.

He had missed two days of work without calling in, most uncharacteristic behavior. He was a bachelor. No one answered the phone at his apartment. The local postmaster, worried, found a way to enter his apartment, where Fred was found dead of a heart attack. He was fifty-one.

Fred played high-school and small-college football at Ripon College in Wisconsin. He was perhaps 6'1", weighed roughly 220. Like a number of black men I know, he had blood-pressure problems, and more than once he dropped 40 or 50 pounds for health reasons.

Late one Sunday I was filling my gas tank at a local station, when a black Ford Expedition—the largest of the SUVs, I believe, next to the thoroughly egregious Hummer—pulled up, a large man with a black Malcolm X hat got out, and, lo, it was Fred, whose great smile drained all the menace out of the car and the hat both. "Can't you get a bigger car than that, Fred?" I asked. "As soon as they make one," he replied, "I promise that I will."

Much of my conversation with Fred was about sports, that lingua franca in which American men of otherwise ostensibly discrepant interests find ways to speak to each other. He knew a lot about sports. At Evanston Township High School he played with Emery Morehead, who went on to play tight end for the Chicago Bears. Through his Morehead connection, Fred would go to Bears training-camp sessions and had no trouble getting tickets for regular-season games.

He was a man of strong, but with me never disruptive, opinions. We agreed that contemporary professional athletes were the physical equivalent of lottery winners; they were, that is, damn lucky: all that money, all that attention. ("Know the toughest thing in the NBA?" Fred once asked me. "Not smiling when you kiss your wife goodbye before going on a road trip.") With only a few exceptions—Walter Payton, Andre Dawson, Cal Ripken Jr. are three I recall—was Fred willing to admit that professional athletes of recent years were other than loutish and hopelessly selfish.

We didn't talk much politics. I assumed he voted Democratic, though, such was his naturally critical bent, my guess is that he could not have been easy on politicians of his own party. "A lot of pressure on the kid," was his one remark about Barack Obama, the new black senator from Illinois. He agreed with me that it would be interesting to see what attempts Jesse Jackson makes to coopt him. I told him that at one time I would have voted for Colin Powell for president on either party ticket. He didn't respond. He wasn't crazy about Condoleezza Rice, whom he thought the type of the good student, teacher's pet division.

Fred would always honk at me when he passed in his mail-truck. One of his favorite bits, when he would find me in a neighborhood restaurant to which he was delivering mail, or when I was walking with a friend, would be to say in a loud voice, "Excuse me, sir, but aren't you George Steinbrenner [or Jerry Reinsdorf, or the agent Scott Boras]? You look awfully familiar."

As a mailman, Fred was up on what was happening in the neighborhood. When a new shop or restaurant was going to open, he was the one who first brought the information to the rest of us. His cheerfulness was almost permanent; and it made it difficult to be grumpy in his presence. After his death, a neighbor wrote to the local paper about how good Fred was at his job, adding that even the simplest meeting with him made her happy.

I read the obituary pages of the *New York Times*, and every week there are two or three people who, if I hadn't myself known them firsthand, were friends or colleagues or editors or friends of friends of mine. But I found I could not shake off Fred's death—can't quite shake it off yet. A replacement for him hasn't yet been found. Whoever the person is, things won't be quite the same. Nobody's ever going to call me Mr. Steinbrenner again.

Joseph Epstein

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The Other "CIA"

The Culinary Institute of America was falsely and inappropriately used in Heather Mac Donald's "Torturing the Evidence" (Jan. 24). Mac Donald's article, which is about the participation of doctors in terrorist interrogations abroad, starts with a mock paragraph that uses the CIA as its subject and quotes from a so-called CIA spokesperson who, in fact, does not exist.

Although this paragraph intended to make a point about a possible scenario that could happen in the future, the use of a real institution in an imaginary scenario is both misleading and defaming to the CIA's good name. As a college of higher education, the CIA has a policy of remaining impartial regarding political disputes. We are disappointed that this article intentionally misrepresented the college, and are further disappointed by The Weekly Standard's refusal to publish a retraction.

Heather A. Rafferty
Culinary Institute of America
Hyde Park, NY

Editor's Note: The italicized paragraph that led the article "Torturing the Evidence," represented as an AP story datelined February 13, 2005, was indeed parodic and not factual.

Sharansky's Case

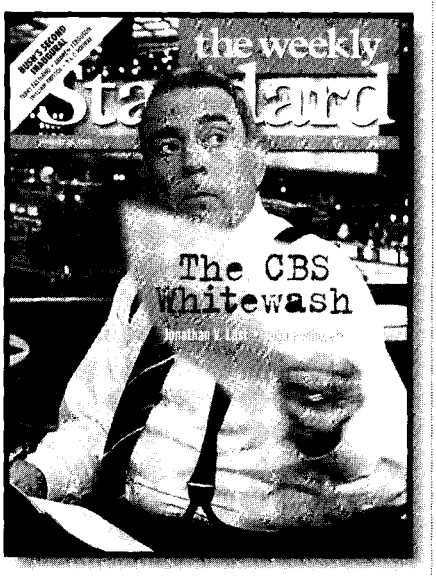
In William Kristol's discussion of Natan Sharansky's *The Case for Democracy* ("Honoring Democracy," Jan. 24), he does not mention the part of the book that most struck me. Talking about the challenges facing people in a "fear society" versus those facing people in a "free society," Sharansky says the former must find "the inner strength to confront evil," whereas the latter must find "the moral clarity to see evil."

Robert Agajeenian
Los Angeles, CA

Social Capital

Irwin M. Stelzer writes that management fees for privatized Social Security accounts will probably be about "1 percent" ("Social Security Snares & Delusions," Jan. 17). *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman agrees with him on this point. They are apparently not aware that dozens of mutual funds have fees that are less than 1 percent, including several index funds that have fees in the range of one-quarter to one-fifth of one percent. Stelzer also states that stocks have historically earned 7 percent. Is that an inflation-adjusted figure? With dividends reinvested—as they would be in a privatized account—the S&P 500 index has grown at about 10 percent per year over many decades.

Stelzer asserts that "with share prices selling at higher multiples than in the past, it is not an unreasonable guess that earnings will be closer to 5 percent."



Presumably he is referring to current price/earnings multiples. That betrays a lack of understanding of the market and the way a retirement fund works. Funds would be invested in privatized accounts at regular intervals (month after month, quarter after quarter, or year after year) for 20 to 45 years. As the market rises and falls, some investments will be made at high multiples and some at low multiples. By the time the first privatized Social Security account is opened, multiples almost surely will be different from what they are today. Today's level will have no bearing on the ultimate value of anyone's account.

A.A. Katterhenry
Clearwater, FL

Irwin M. Stelzer errs in his assertion that "[i]mprovements in productivity at rates of recent years . . . will allow the workforce to support a higher ratio of retirees than is now the case."

Because increases in annual benefits are tied to wages rather than prices—and because labor productivity drives wages down—increases in productivity cannot solve the fundamental fiscal problem created by the Social Security Ponzi scheme. Nor will that obvious simple reform—substitution of a price index in place of the wage index—be adopted, because over time it would yield benefits substantially lower than under current formulas.

More generally, Stelzer is far too evenhanded. The plain reality is that Democrats, for the most part, care not one whit about the purported risk of private accounts, (illusory) transition costs, or any of the other goblins hiding in their Social Security closet. They are instead interested in perpetuating a system that makes ordinary people more, rather than less, dependent upon the federal government. In its traditional form, Social Security serves that end beautifully.

Private retirement accounts, on the other hand, promote the opposite outcome, and that is why leftists will never agree to adopt them as a Social Security reform.

Benjamin Zycher
Agoura Hills, CA

Irwin M. Stelzer responds: A.A. Katterhenry is quite right: There are funds that charge a management fee of less than 1 percent. And there may well be economies of scale that make it possible to charge fees at that lower level to privatized Social Security accounts. But I doubt it, for two reasons. First, everyone I talk to in the brokerage business says that these tens of millions of tiny accounts will be very difficult to manage efficiently—note there is no political support for this program on Wall Street, which ordinarily does not look a gift fee in the mouth.

Second, the hope that politicians will allow the completely passive management that produces low fees seems to me unlikely to be realized. When the first congressman realizes that an index fund

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contains tobacco stocks—or shares in some companies he considers environmentally irresponsible—pressure will mount for changes in permissible investments, driving up management costs.

Katterhenry also says "multiples almost surely will be different from what they are today" when the day of retirement comes. True. Would that we could be certain they are not so much lower that the government feels obliged to step in as insurer of last resort.

Benjamin Zycher accuses me of being "far too evenhanded." Thanks, Ben, for that, and for pointing out that productivity gains alone cannot cure such ills as may exist in the present system. But don't rush to judgment on the question of independence from government. A system in which government selects the instruments in which one is allowed to invest is not all that different in its effects on a citizen's independence than the current system.

When all is said and done, keeping the current system, which has helped to soften the hard edges of meritocratic capitalism sufficiently to make it politically acceptable, combined with tax reform and new incentives to save, seems the better route for President Bush to follow.

Now and Then

I FOR ONE HAVE never stopped thinking about yesterday, as Christopher Caldwell so cleverly states in his Jan. 17 CASUAL ("Don't Stop Thinking About Yesterday"). Back in the 1950s, I came up with this historical timeframe: The period between 1607, the year of the first English settlement in America, and 1776 amounts to the same length of time as the period between 1776 and 1945.

What an extraordinary difference there was in America's development between the first pair of years as compared with the second.

THOMAS HAYES
Lee, MA

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL'S essay on calculating half-lives reminded me of an event from a couple years ago. My wife and I were at dinner with two other couples. We were then all in our mid-thirties—and thus too young to know how old we were.

Into the restaurant walked four or five couples obviously on their way to the prom. Several in our group began to reminisce about our own proms—until I uttered a comment that darkened the mood.

All I said was, "You know, those high-schoolers are closer in age to our own children than they are to us." It had been a happy evening until then.

BOB KRUMM
Nashville, TN

Kamikaze Redux

HERE'S A FOOTNOTE to Duncan Currie's "The Other Special Relationship" (Dec. 20), which suggested, in part, that Japan's World War II defeat and rehabilitation is a precedent for present coalition efforts in the Middle East: Back then, as today, the enemy used suicide bombers—the *kamikaze*.

ROBERT E. BERSHAD
Philadelphia, PA

Errata

BECAUSE OF AN editing error in "Torturing the Evidence" (Jan. 24), we misidentified Jonathan H. Marks as a "biological anthropologist at the University of North Carolina." The article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that was the subject of our coverage was coauthored by Jonathan H. Marks of the Georgetown University Law Center and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. We apologize to both Mr. Markses.

A Jan. 24 SCRAPBOOK item referred to the December 1992 meeting in which Newt Gingrich explained that his "primary mission" included serving as the "Definer of Civilization." At the time, Gingrich was House minority *whip*, not minority leader. Longtime Illinois congressman Bob Michel was the House minority leader, a position that he held until his retirement two years later.

William Kristol's Jan. 31 editorial referred to Ronald Reagan's "talk of transcending or overcoming communism" as having occurred "two decades" after the Truman Doctrine. The text should have read two *generations*.

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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the weekly Standard

The Ruthless Party

On the eve of the election in Iraq, Democratic senator Edward Kennedy called President Bush's Iraq policy "a catastrophic failure." He demanded that American troops immediately begin to withdraw. "We have no choice," he declared, "but to make the best we can of the disaster we have created in Iraq." Kennedy said the retreat of American forces should be completed "as early as possible in 2006," and suggested that, in Iraq, American troops are a bigger problem than terrorists.

Though appalling, Kennedy's statement was not out of character for Democrats these days. "I don't like to impugn anyone's integrity," said Democratic senator Mark Dayton, before impugning the integrity of Condoleezza Rice. "But I really don't like being lied to, repeatedly, flagrantly, intentionally. It is wrong, it is undemocratic, it is un-American, and it is dangerous." After Rice took exception to being called untruthful by Democratic senator Barbara Boxer, Boxer complained on TV: "She turned and attacked me."

This is madness, but there is method in it. The talk among congressional Democrats is about the tactics Newt Gingrich used as House minority whip in 1993 and 1994. As they remember it, Gingrich opposed, blocked, attacked, zinged, or at least criticized everything President Clinton and Democratic leaders proposed. It was a scorched-earth approach, Democrats believe. And it worked, crippling Clinton and resulting in the 1994 election that gave Republicans control—lasting control, it turned out—of the House and Senate. Now Democrats, after losing three straight elections, hope brutal tactics will work for them.

So they ganged up on Rice, accusing her of lying about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, though they had relied on the same faulty intelligence about WMD. They blamed Alberto Gonzales, as chief White House counsel, of fostering the torture of captured terrorists. All he had done, however, was render a legal opinion on the status of terrorists under the Geneva Convention. As most experts agree, terrorists aren't covered. Kennedy threw the word "quagmire" around like confetti. And so on. What was the initial response of Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid to the president's idea of reforming Social Security? Bush wants to "destroy" the system, Reid insisted.

Yet Democrats act as if they're taking the moral high ground. Listen to Howard Dean, who's favored to become the next Democratic national chairman. Asked in an unaired interview with Fox News to list his supporters for chairman, Dean said: "It's not likely I'm gonna make an announcement like that on Fox . . . because Fox is the propaganda outlet of the Republican party. . . . I have to weigh the legitimacy that it gives you."

Dean is delusional. He and other Democrats cannot confer or deny legitimacy. Nor do they really understand the lessons of the Gingrich era. True, Newt used rough tactics to tear down Democratic proposals and challenge Democratic leaders. He was relentless. But he was also an idea factory of conservative concepts and initiatives. His goal was to attract conservative voters who weren't Republicans. And he succeeded.

The 1994 breakthrough "was the culmination of a long process in which voters' ideology finally got in line with their partisanship," columnist David Brooks explained recently in the *New York Times*. "The Democrats today . . . have all the liberals. What they lack is support from middle-class white families in fast-growing suburbs. But by copying the Gingrich tactics—or what they think of as Gingrich tactics—of hyperpartisanship and ruthless oppositionalism, they will only alienate those voters even more."

Brooks is correct. Democrats misunderstand their situation. Their view is that Republicans have been mean and bruising while they've been too nice and forgiving. That's right. They think former Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle, who was plainly obsessed with obstructing Bush at every turn, was too kindly. The lesson of the 2004 election for Democrats, then, is that they need to play rough. The real lesson, of course, is that blatant obstructionism is a failed strategy. It's what caused Daschle to lose his seat.

The media tolerate or even encourage Democratic rage. But the White House can't afford to. Senate Democrats have enough votes to block major Bush initiatives like Social Security reform and to reject Bush appointees, including Supreme Court nominees. They may be suicidal, but they could undermine the president's entire second term agenda. At his news conference last week, Bush reacted calmly to their vitriolic attacks, suggesting only a few Democrats are involved. Stronger countermeasures will be needed, including an unequivocal White House response to obstructionism, curbs on filibusters, and a clear delineation of what's permissible and what's out of bounds in dissent on Iraq. Too much is at stake to wait for another Democratic defeat in 2006.

—Fred Barnes, for the Editors

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So Long, Johnny

Johnny Carson (1925-2005).

BY LARRY MILLER

WHEN A PROMINENT American in any field passes on, it's front-page news. Some sneer at this and say, "The same thing happens to everyone. Why is it bigger if it happens to a star?" But I think it is bigger. Yes, thousands probably die in the same way at the same time, and each is a sorrow, but the passing of a beloved icon makes us all stop and think and reflect and remember, and gives a country with too little in common a great deal in common, if only briefly. So it is with Johnny Carson. Even in the hard-edged world of politics, for instance, I like to think that, when they heard the news, Howard Dean and Karl Rove and everyone in between stopped strategizing for a minute and thought, "Boy, I really loved that guy."

I've always felt the things written about comedians after they're gone come up short. "The low-key Nebraskan" is a phrase that's been bandied about already, which sounds a little like all the other low-key Nebraskans could've made America laugh for 30 years, too, if they felt like it.

Well, I loved the guy, and I mean, first, as a fan. I feel sorry for the younger folks who never saw him, who too often have to absorb their entertainment today in cynical bites, and think humor means anger and audacity and graphic descriptions of this and that. They will never know what it means when you take talent and hard work and mix it with grace, joy, class, respect, and forbearance.

I'm not any cleverer than the good reporters who've already written so much about him. For my part, I thought you might like to hear a story from my times on the *Tonight Show*, starring Johnny Carson.

There were a bunch of other shows, and those of us doing stand-up jumped at the chance to do any of them, but the *Tonight Show* was the one you wanted, period. The others were important, and good exposure, and big steps forward, but there were only two groups, really, B.C. and A.C.: Before Carson, and After Carson. A lot of good comics never got a shot, but I was one of the lucky ones.

My first time was in 1986, and I guess I was on 15 or 20 times till he left in 1992. As many of you know, there was a special place in Johnny's heart and on his show for young comedians, and there were a bunch of traditions surrounding those appearances. Every comic wanted them all.

You probably know about "The Big Okay." It was after you finished, and not everyone got it. We knew there was no way we were going to be invited over to sit on the couch—that was for another time; you didn't just go from captain to colonel, you have to be a major first. But what you wanted was to bow and say thank you to the audience, and look over to Johnny. If he liked you, you'd get a smile, and if he really liked you, you'd get a smile and a wink, and if he really, really liked you, you'd get a smile and a wink and The Big Okay. Once in a blue moon he liked someone so much—Steven Wright was one, I think—he'd wave you over on your first shot. I got the smile and the wink and The Big Okay, and that was heaven on earth right there.

A few appearances later, I got called over to the couch, and there's a bit of a story to that. A friend of mine had noticed I was wearing the same clothes on dozens of other shows and said, "You're doing the *Tonight Show* now, idiot. You need a better outfit." This was fine with me, and he took me to a fancy joint in Beverly Hills, one of those places that doesn't even have a name on it, you just pull around in back and someone lets you in. So they hooked me up with a black, double-breasted Armani suit, and a sharp shirt and tie, and I'd still be embarrassed, 19 years later, to tell you how much it cost. My pal was on the road on the day of the show, so my agent at the time, Tom Stern, went with me. We picked up the suit at the store, and drove to NBC.

Now, I'm always early for things, so there was plenty of time to walk out onstage while the studio was empty, and run the material, and check my notes, and have some coffee, and get made up. I said hello to Jim McCawley (the segment producer who hired all the comics; he passed away some years ago), and he said, "I'll see you in a few," and the band struck up, and the show began. I watched Johnny's monologue from backstage, and then strolled back to the dressing room, the picture of calmness, ready to roll. I took my sneakers and casual pants off during the first guest, and put the white shirt and tie on, and the dress socks and the shoes, and watched the intro for the second guest in my underwear. (A good comic never puts the suit on too soon: It wrinkles.) Then, cool and happy, I unzipped the bag from the store, took out the jacket, and stared at the other side of the bag for a few seconds.

There were no pants.

I turned to Tom, and said, "No pants." On the TV in the background, the second guest came out and shook hands with Johnny. Tom ran out to find Jim.

I picked up the phone in the dressing room and called the store, and when the salesman came on I repeated my new mantra, "No pants." He found them in the back and said, "Don't worry, I'll bring them right over."

I hung up and looked in the mirror at my fancy new shirt and tie and boxer shorts, and the high socks and wingtips, and wondered how the Armani jacket was going to look over the pair

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of beige painter's pants I had worn to the studio. I was grateful the salesman was going to try and bring them over, but, please, Beverly Hills to Burbank on a Thursday at 5:33 P.M.? There was no way. By missile, in the middle of the night, it's still 20 minutes to Burbank. But I'll tell you, I don't remember being scared. In fact I was as calm as a vat of whiskey. Of course, maybe I was just in deep shock.

This outer calm hadn't yet translated to my speech center, though. I kept saying "No pants" every few seconds. Like the good agent and friend he was, Tom didn't want me to see him throw up, or scream, so he pulled himself together and turned back out down the hall for a breath. Unfortunately, the direction he chose dead-ended in a wall nine inches later. He hit his head so hard it made a sound and instantly grew a lump the size of another, smaller head.

Now Jim came running back with the wardrobe guy; they had found a pair of very nice black dress pants which went with the jacket. Jim had a big smile of victory, and it made me feel ungrateful and churlish to point out there was just one tiny problem: The pants had, apparently, last been worn by William Conrad, and were at least 75 inches in the waist. We looked at each other: Jim, the wardrobe guy, me, Tom, and the lump on Tom's forehead (which I'll call Tom Jr.). The wardrobe guy said, "Try them on. I can nip them in the back." I did, and he could, but the nip was two and a half feet long. I don't want to judge, but I think that's too long for a nip.

I took them off and we all glanced up at the television as Johnny went to commercial. "Okay," Jim said, "Johnny's going to do one more segment. Let's get you behind the curtain. If the pants don't get here in time from the store, you'll go out in these." Fine, and off we all went, Tom and Tom Jr. bringing up the rear, their motor skills still noticeably impaired.

I got behind the curtain, and the guy holding it didn't even blink when he saw me in my underwear and Jim holding a pair of enormous clown pants. After all, this was the same guy who had pulled the curtain for Tiny Tim. Tom and his lump said, "I'm going to wait for the guy from the store," and off he limped. I admired his spunk, since I didn't see any chance at all that either the pants or Tom would make it to the front gate.

"I think you better put on the pants," said Jim. The star being interviewed was wrapping up his last story, and Johnny was laughing. I held a finger up and tried desperately to remember what my first line was. They went to commercial, the band kicked up, and Jim said, "Okay, I really think you have to put on the pants." I finally remembered my first line, and Jim said, "Larry, please put on the pants." Well, I had no choice, and I pulled them over my shoes as the band came back from commercial, and my heart sank a little as I buckled the front and felt the tent-sized piece of material in the back. I was going to look like Quasimodo in a jet pack. And then . . .

Everyone used to say that Walter Cronkite was the most trusted man in America when he was on, but I think it just might have been Johnny Carson.

Suddenly something crashed, someone screamed, and around the corner came poor, dazed Tom shouting, "I GOT THE PANTS. I GOT THE PANTS." The only reason Johnny and the audience couldn't hear him was because the band had just blasted out their last big, long, brass lick. We all looked at each other like Easter Island statues. The only one who took it in stride was the guy at the curtain.

A low moan started in my throat, became a shudder, and ended in a shrug. I ripped the fat pants off as fast as I could and grabbed the new ones just as we heard Johnny saying, *"Our next guest is a very funny young man . . . "* I pulled one leg on and started the other, *". . . who's been with us before . . ."* The other leg went in and I stuffed the shirt down. *"He'll be appearing at The Punchline in Atlanta on the 25th . . ."* I clipped the pants, looked at the belt in my hand and threw it away hard, stage right, and heard Jim mutter, "Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus." I started buttoning the inner button on the double-breasted jacket, and missed it, and tried it again, and missed it again, and the stage hand started pulling the curtain and put his hand on my shoulder. *"So please welcome . . ."* I growled at the inner button and abandoned it. *"Larry . . ."* The hand began to push, and I closed the jacket and fastened the outer button. *". . . Miller!"*

I guess I love this business and always have, and maybe we're all a little nuts, and maybe you have to be, but all I remember is strolling around that curtain without a care in the world and having a great time and a great set, and when I bowed and waved goodbye, that's when I turned to Johnny, and that's when he waved me over to the couch for the first time.

It was pretty great. I shook his hand, which was even better, and he said, "Good stuff," which was the best of all, and I shook hands with the other folks on the couch, and Ed (who I loved as soon as he smiled at me), and then they went to commercial. And as the band started playing, Johnny leaned over and said, "Funny. Funny stuff." (Can't you just hear that sharp rhythm of his saying those short phrases?) And I said thank you and then he picked up a pencil and started tapping it on the desk to the music—remember how he used to do that?—and then we came back from commercial, and he wrapped it up, and thanked everyone, and we shook hands again, and everyone stood, and the band played, and the credits rolled. And he came around the desk, and I guess I was looking down at my suit, kind of amazed at how close it had all been, and I saw him coming over, and I shrugged and said, "New suit." And he said, "Sharp."

You all know how good Carson was. In an era that seems to grow coarser each day, he radiated manners. Every-

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one used to say that Walter Cronkite was the most trusted man in America when he was on, but I think it just might have been Johnny Carson. I know who I'd trust more, and I sure know who was funnier.

There's an old Jewish saying that every man's heaven or hell is determined by what people say about him after his death. It's a good thought, and if it's true, Johnny Carson is soaring very, very high.

I guess Ed is supposed to lead us now in shouting, "How high is he?" Johnny would have a good line for that one.

One thing's certain. I'll bet God just waved him over to the couch. ♦

Paying His Respects

A low-key vice presidential visit to Auschwitz, 60 years after liberation. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Oswiecim, Poland

THREE Holocaust survivors stood in front of the memorial to their family and friends, waiting for the ceremony commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The three men were dressed almost identically, in brown boots, gray slacks, heavy black coats, and blue and white striped hats that resembled the prison uniforms they'd worn as children. And each man wore a blue and white sash across his chest with a red "P"—for his native Poland—and his identification number.

The man on the right stood at attention, and the one in the middle seemed to lean a bit on the commemorative flag he held. The man on the left—No. 46464—fidgeted incessantly, shifting his weight from left foot to right and right foot to left. He flexed his fingers and swung his head from side to side, surveying the crowd. He looked nervous, but was probably just cold.

The subfreezing temperature meant that everyone in attendance was bundled up—most of the dignitaries in black, and the crowd in a wide array of colors. Snowflakes the size of quarters drifted lightly to the ground, adding to the six-inch accumulation of the previous two days. The three survivors stood on spongy blue squares to keep their feet off the snow. The cold was somehow right.

The survivors chatted amongst themselves; their occasional laughter would have seemed inappropriate from anyone else. Standing just a few feet away from the men, in the section roped off for journalists, a young woman wept silently, moved by the occasion even before the ceremony began. Suddenly, and at a decibel level so loud it was almost painful, the stadium-sized speakers emitted the piercing sounds of a train screeching to a halt. One of the many haunting features of Auschwitz is the train track that stops in the middle of the camp—the track used to import over a million Jews from across Europe to their demise in southwestern Poland.

The solemn ceremony lasted nearly four hours. Several dignitaries spoke. Vice President Dick Cheney, representing the United States, was not one of them. In fact, over the course of three days in Poland, Cheney made only three short speeches, deliberately keeping a low profile on a trip meant mainly to pay respect to the victims of the Holocaust and the soldiers who liberated Auschwitz. (Cheney—who had been to Auschwitz once before, in 1975, as chief of staff to Gerald Ford—met privately with Polish president Aleksandr Kwasniewski and newly elected Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko.)

In the remarks he did make, Cheney alluded to the need to confront evil, once echoing almost verbatim comments President Bush had made at Auschwitz on May 31, 2003, less than seven weeks after the fall of Baghdad. The death camps "remind us that evil is real and must be called by name and must be opposed," Bush said, evoking the more recent horrors of Saddam Hussein's regime.

For all the potential parallels, the White House chose to leave them unspoken this time. Cheney's staff considered and quickly rejected a proposal to use the trip for a major policy statement about the war on terror and global democracy. But the sweeping themes of Bush's inaugural address were present in Cheney's remarks, expressed in subtler tones. "In every generation, free nations must maintain the will, the foresight, and the strength to fight tyranny and spread the freedom that leads to peace," he said at a reception for survivors of Auschwitz on Wednesday.

Russian president Vladimir Putin, who won sustained applause at the same forum when he said he was "ashamed" of the continuing anti-Semitism in his country, compared the Nazi threat to today's terrorism. "Today we shall not only remember the past, but also be aware of all the threats of the modern world," he said later at the Auschwitz memorial. "Terrorism is among them, and it is no less dangerous and cunning than fascism. . . . As there were no 'good' and 'bad' fascists, there cannot be 'good' and 'bad' terrorists. Any double standards here are absolutely unacceptable and deadly dangerous for civilization."

The ceremony ended the same way it had begun—with the deafening screech of a train. Then the tracks were set ablaze in the snow, and a tower of light reached from the ground to the sky. ♦

Stephen F. Hayes is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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An Outpost of Tyranny

What will Washington do about Mugabe's Zimbabwe? BY ROGER BATE

SECRETARY OF STATE Condoleezza Rice has identified Zimbabwe as one of six "outposts of tyranny." She is certainly right. What remains unclear is what immediate steps Washington is prepared to take to oppose the regime of Robert Mugabe and address the consequences of its misrule—a collapsing economy, the prospect of mass starvation by April, and a swelling flood of refugees in neighboring countries.

Currently, most commentators are focusing on the elections supposed to take place in March. President Mugabe, who with his ZANU-PF party stole the last two elections in 2000 and 2002 by ballot-rigging, intimidation, voter fraud, and many other violations of the constitution, has said he will meet the election requirements laid out by the Southern African Development Community.

The most important of these are political tolerance, freedom of association, equal access to state media, and independence of the judiciary and electoral institutions—none of which is anywhere in sight, according to the main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change. Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the MDC, told me in November that he didn't expect Mugabe to honor any of the conditions—but that if ZANU-PF reduced the level of violence, he would lead his party into the elections. That now appears in the offing. "Some rogue elements still exist here and there," Tsvangirai said last week, "but by and large we have witnessed a decrease in cases of open violence against political opponents."

More skeptical insiders, including Tsvangirai's adviser Welshman Ncube, said that violence perpetrated by police continues. They stop the MDC from holding political rallies, and leave party activists at risk of being abducted, beaten, and tortured by ruling-party militias and members of the security forces. Furthermore, an analysis of the electoral rolls in 2000 (the last time any independent observer was able to examine them) suggests that there may be as many as 400,000 deceased people available to vote—and, as one MDC activist put it, "the dead don't vote for the opposition." In the last election, out of an electorate of less than 5.5 million, some 600,000 government supporters managed to vote twice.

The Independent Electoral Commission is the latest in a long line of sick jokes, being neither independent of Mugabe's control nor a real commission. For example, it has overseen the drawing up of district boundaries that reduce the number of members of parliament elected in the MDC strongholds of Harare, the capital, and Bulawayo, the second city, claiming the number of registered voters has fallen, while increasing representation in Mugabe's rural strongholds in the northeast. The reason the numbers have fallen—Mugabe's reign of terror, which has caused over 3 million desperate and malnourished Zimbabweans to flee—is never acknowledged.

There are almost no independent media. The last important paper, the *Daily News*, was bombed out of its offices in 2003. The *Standard* and the *Independent* (both owned by Trevor Ncube, who owned the *Daily News*) still just about operate, but they must self-censor and are nowhere near as robust as the *Daily News* was. Meanwhile, the ZANU-PF-controlled radio and TV stations spout absurd anti-MDC propaganda, accusing the opposition of the very acts of savagery, including rape and murder, that they commit.

All government meetings feature anti-MDC sloganeering. With some trepidation lest he be perceived as supporting the odious Mugabe regime, my colleague Richard Tren, South Africa director of Africa Fighting Malaria, attended a malaria-control meeting in Kariba, in northern Zimbabwe, in November. His aim was to encourage the use of sensible policies to save children from this deadly disease that claims hundreds of lives a week. Tren left in disgust when the "health" meeting descended into a pseudo-rally against the opposition, who had not been invited. Representatives of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and other multilateral organizations stayed till the end of the event, giving tacit support to the current regime.

So why is Morgan Tsvangirai not boycotting an election he cannot win? There are two possible reasons. The first is the more palatable. If the MDC were to sit out the election, ZANU-PF would certainly win enough seats to be able to change the constitution, which could be crucial when Mugabe either dies or is overthrown. The MDC currently holds 57 seats, and must retain at least 50 to veto constitutional amendments.

This is important, because under the present constitution, elections must be held if the president dies or resigns. Some ruling-party officials would like Mugabe to appoint a successor, who would then have a few years in power before facing the people with all the advantages of incumbency. Even if the MDC does take part, of course, it may not retain enough seats to prevent such politi-

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cal nepotism from occurring.

As for the second reason Tsvangirai will participate in the election, several Zimbabwe watchers who wish to remain nameless say he may be seeking to hold his party together under his leadership, with or without any hope of victory, in order to maintain the support of the international community, which wants the country to be seen as passably democratic. Participation will keep him on the international stage, and prevent South African and international officials, including at the State Department, from being forced to act.

So far, inaction has been the order of the day. Quiet diplomacy—the "talk, talk, and more talk" of South African president Thabo Mbeki—is changing nothing in Zimbabwe, and the West's support of it has done no good.

Unlike in Darfur or the regions ravaged by the tsunami, the bodies are not piling up under the scrutiny of a video-hungry media. Instead, apart from a steady but relatively small number of victims of political murder, black Zimbabweans are dying out of sight, in rural communities, of starvation and HIV. Harvests are about 15 percent of normal, and there are no drugs to treat any but the very fortunate. With the next harvest expected to be the lowest in decades, the death toll is due to rise around the time of the election. Already most food is allocated only to ZANU-PF voters. Surely the time to act on this betrayal of the most basic of human rights is now.

Secretary Rice is to be commended for addressing Zimbabwe. But the rhetorical battle has only just begun. She must convince southern African leaders that U.S. aid, military support, and other diplomatic favors such as trade deals hinge on their solving the problem on their doorstep. They must believe that unless they enforce the election protocols agreed to by Mugabe, the United States will withdraw support for the region. Business as usual should not be an option for this outpost of tyranny. ♦

They Always Bash Bush First

The *Washington Post* rewrites the president's speech. BY PETER BERKOWITZ

LOCAL CRITICS have found in President Bush's second inaugural address an excellent opportunity to remonstrate, revile, and ridicule the president. Only they've had to rewrite the speech to do it.

On Friday, January 21, the day after Inauguration Day, John F. Harris published an "analysis" on the front page of the *Washington Post* which set the stage by citing unnamed authorities who maintained that the president had spoken in absolute and inflexible terms: "The immediate question, presidential scholars and foreign policy experts say, is . . . What to make of such idealistic and uncompromising language from an incumbent president? If taken at face value, Bush's words would imply nearly limitless obligations to confront all manner of autocrats around the planet, even in cases in which anti-democratic governments in the Middle East and elsewhere support U.S. interests."

So, Bush is too much of an idealist. Or not. *Post* columnist E.J. Dionne, in a piece four days later entitled ". . . Oh, Never Mind," wondered whether he ought to apologize to his readers for having initially taken the president's "promise of an expansive campaign on behalf of democracy too seriously." Dionne was incensed by what administration officials were saying about the speech. On Saturday, January 22, the *Washington Post* had reported that Bush advisers were insisting that the president's speech was "carefully written not to tie him to any inflexible or unrealistic application of his goal of ending tyranny." And, Dionne noted indignantly, on the same day, the *New York Times* had quoted an administration official who contended that while the president's rhetoric was "bold," this "did not imply that the United States would impose its views on other countries or overlook their particular social and political problems." For Dionne, these statements were shameful falsifications: "Barely 24 hours after the last marching band paraded past the White House, the president's lieutenants were out there spinning that all those lovely words didn't mean quite as much as they seemed to have meant."

Some, Dionne noted, would take solace in the president's Friday repudiation of his Thursday pronouncements: "Bush's Freedom Shuffle—he's an idealist on Thursday and a realist on Friday—may come as a relief to the many foreign policy specialists allergic to grand visions." But there was no relief for Dionne: "The Freedom Shuffle is a terrible mistake for Bush, because the greatest barrier to Bush's success in his second term is the intense cynicism he has inspired about his motives."

In the *Post*'s Style section on the same day, staff writer Hanna Rosin had great fun with the supposed presidential mess that administration officials were scurrying to clean up. She mocked Bush spokesmen for saying that the president's speech represented an elaboration of his policies rather than a break with them. And she made light of the suggestion that the president meant to say the struggle

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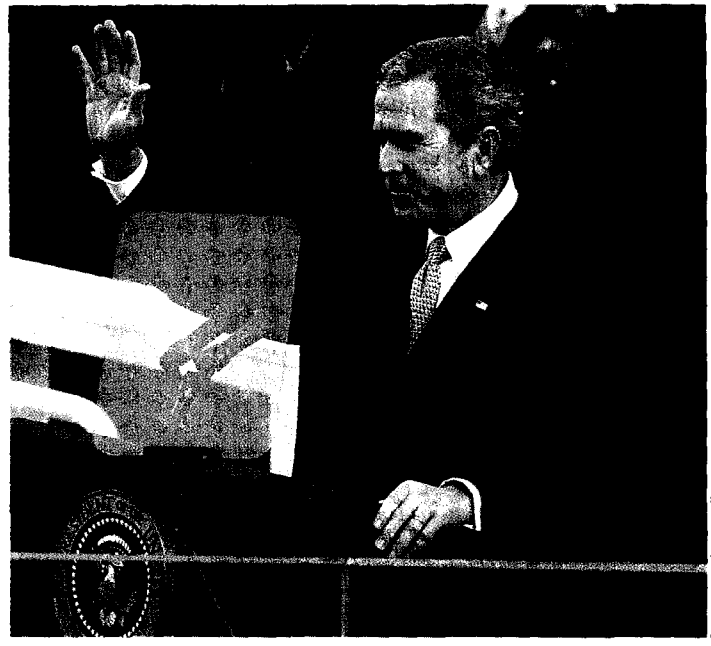
for freedom is a "generational struggle," one that must proceed in different ways and at varying pace in different countries. Such after-the-fact revisionism was tantamount, according to Rosin, to Churchill declaring a day later that, "Okay, so not quite an Iron Curtain, I meant more like pewter." Or to Martin Luther King Jr. letting it be known that, "Well, it wasn't really a dream. More like a daydream."

The trouble for Rosin's effort to parody Bush as confused and feckless is that administration officials had not changed the president's message. Instead, in the face of efforts to put ridiculous words in the president's mouth, they had accurately restated the leading themes of his inaugural address.



EPA / Matt Campbell

It was on Thursday, from the great podium at the Capitol looking out onto the mall and toward the Washington Monument, the National World War II Memorial, and the Lincoln Memorial, and addressing the nation as a whole, that the president himself declared, "The great objective of ending tyranny is the concentrated work of generations." And, again, it was the president who affirmed the need to respect the diversity of nations, explaining that "when the soul of a nation finally speaks, the institutions that arise may reflect customs and traditions very different from our own." And it was the president who brought out the continuity in his policy by linking the determination to expand freedom in the world to "the durable wisdom of our Constitution," to our "deep commitments," and to the "day of fire" which compelled us to rethink the relation between our "vital interests and our deepest beliefs."

The trouble for Dionne's sarcastic description of Bush as "an idealist on Thursday and a realist on Friday" is that Bush and his team blended idealism and realism on both days. Just as administration officials indicated, in his inaugural address the president idealistically—and correctly—asserted that "from the day of our Founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of heaven and earth. Across the generations we have proclaimed the imperative of self-government, because no one is fit to be a master, and no one deserves to be a slave." And yet, as the president also realistically explained, since "freedom, by its nature, must be chosen and defended by citizens, and sustained by the rule of law and the protection of minorities," the limited goal of the United States must be "to help others find their own voice, attain their own freedom, and make their own way." Indeed, the president made clear, in a memorable formulation, that in a post-9/11 world, the strategic imperative and the moral imperative have converged: "The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands."

The trouble for Harris's imputation to the president of an uncompromising obligation to immediately and everywhere confront all autocrats, whether friend or foe, is that while the president expressed an unyielding conviction in the goodness of the goal of human freedom, he also acknowledged the need for flexibility in pursuing it: "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in the world." Seek and support, not coerce or compel. Indeed, as the president observed, promoting freedom is "not primarily the task of arms."

To be sure, the president's breathtaking defense of liberty raises plenty of questions. For example, how will the reconstruction of Iraq play out and affect our efforts to defend freedom? What kinds of concrete pressures are we equipped and willing to bring to bear on hostile regimes such as Iran and North Korea; on the rising giant China; and on autocratic allies such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt? And is the president's evangelical liberalism a departure from American traditions, or has it fallen to Bush to make explicit and defend the evangelical tendency within our liberalism?

But instead of pursuing these important matters, the locals have been busy condemning the president for distancing himself from the implications of a speech he never gave. At the end of his January 25 column, E.J. Dionne admonished the president: "You can spin a lot of things. Freedom shouldn't be one of them." The spin doctors here, however, are Dionne and his colleagues. They have placed fanning the flames of Bush hatred ahead of cooperating in the development of ideas for the arduous and multifaceted task of spreading liberty abroad. But aren't liberals supposed to put freedom first? ♦

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Our Man in Havana

James Cason ponders the prospects for democracy in Cuba. **BY DUNCAN CURRIE**

FOR ELECTION NIGHT 2004, America's senior diplomat in Havana threw a party—the only such gala in town. James Cason decked out his residence with balloons, campaign materials, a giant-screen TV, and a mock voting station. His Cuban guests, maybe 180 people, watched CNN en Español, and learned of U.S. electoral rules via telephone hookup. Many wore Bush-Cheney buttons. And when they cast mock ballots, it was George Bush in a landslide—only 15 percent went for John Kerry. Cason says his visitors stayed till 3 in the morning. "We couldn't get rid of them," he laughs.

Chief of mission at the U.S. Interests Section (a de facto embassy), Cason is known for boldly promoting democratic ways in Cuba. His efforts thrill Cuban Americans, especially Republicans. "Jim Cason will be remembered as one of the great friends of the Cuban people," says Miami-area congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart. Florida senator Mel Martinez likewise sees Cason as "a real historic figure."

The New Jersey-born Cason, 60, is a 35-year veteran of the Foreign Service. He first made waves during a stint in Montevideo. In May 1982, Uruguay's right-wing military regime expelled Cason for his contacts with Uruguayan democrats in the opposition.

Prior to assuming his Havana post in September 2002, Cason knew little about Cuba, but he'd had a taste of another Caribbean island. He says of his arrival in Grenada shortly after its 1983 liberation by the U.S. military, "I'd never seen people come running up to you and put their arms around you and say, 'Thank you for saving us.' That stuck with me."

In Cuba, Cason logged over 6,000 travel miles during his first six months on the job. He ventured outside Havana "every other week," he says, "always invited by the Cubans." He gave away thousands of books and short-wave radios. He also hosted Cuba's pro-democracy dissidents at his official residence, and invited them to the U.S. mission. The mission provided access to Radio Martí, TV Martí, CNN en Español, children's books, films, the Internet, and foreign press clips. "Anything that Cuba banned, we would show," Cason explains.

He held a Christmas party for the children of political prisoners. And he unveiled a replica of a solitary confinement cell in his backyard.

Bound by U.S. policy, he did *not* offer Cubans cash, but he aided them in myriad other ways. At the time, "lots of independent groups were springing up," Cason recalls. It wasn't to last. In March and April 2003, Cuban authorities locked up some 75 dissidents, many of them charged with meeting under Cason's auspices.

"They really tried to take out the main activists," Cason says, namely, Marta Beatriz Roque, head of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society, and the Ferrer brothers, key members of Oswaldo Payá's Christian Liberation Movement. At least 14 of the original 75 have since been released, including Marta Beatriz Roque. But all the releases were conditional furloughs. "They're not free," Cason argues. "What [Castro's] basically saying is, 'Leave the country.'"

Maybe some will, but not Roque. She plans to hold a congress of her Assembly this spring. And Payá has rebuilt his organization. "Down, but not out," is how Cason paints the dissident forces. The regime "won't let them get too large and too active." But "they've learned how to live within the system."

U.S. diplomats must do the same. In early March 2003, right before the crackdown, Castro imposed draconian curbs on their travel. Cason says mission officials can no longer leave the Havana area—"except to visit dual-national prisoners" and meet ships bearing Cubans plucked from the sea. So they have adjusted.

"Instead of having an outreach program, we have what we call an 'inreach' program," Cason explains. Several weeks after his election-night festivities, he held a Christmas party for the children of political prisoners. And last September he drew media attention by unveiling a replica of a Cuban solitary confinement prison cell in his backyard. He based the model on a description that jailed Cuban democrat Oscar Biscet gave his wife. Save for the heat, "everything in there was authentic," says Cason, right down to the cockroaches. "That cell now is a permanent part of" the U.S. mission.

The stunt was typical of Cason, who emphasizes "the use of symbols and images . . . things that [will] catch international attention." At Christmas, he illuminated the Interests Section with holiday icons—such as Frosty the Snowman, Santa Claus, and reindeer—and a gigantic neon "75." At first, few Cubans understood what "75" meant. "That was the reason we put it up," Cason stresses.

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He knew Cuban leaders "would overreact, because they always do." Sure enough, the regime soon fired back with a huge billboard across the street depicting U.S. abuses at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. Stamped "Made In USA," it also contained a large red swastika and the word "Fascistas." A nearby poster depicted Cason as a swastika-sporting corporal dropping bombs from his sleigh.

Even so, Cason believes his side "won" the Christmas war. "Now everybody in Cuba knows that they have these political prisoners," he says. A group of Cuban musicians personally thanked him for his "75."

Fidel has made him into "Darth Vader," Cason says, but ordinary Cubans seem to appreciate his work. More than 4,000 Cubans drop by the U.S. Interests Section each month. They see the mission—originally opened during the Carter administration as a step toward normalizing relations—as a spearhead of the island's democracy drive.

Formally, the Interests Section is part of the Swiss embassy, but it has its own building and staff, which Castro limits to 51 people. Access to high-level Cuban officials is all but zero. The regime frequently harasses American diplomats, and monitors "everything"—phone calls, emails, meetings.

During the recent Christmas spat, Havana threatened to close the U.S. mission. In the end, they just bombarded it with music. Meanwhile, a cartoon aired on state TV lampooning Cason as "Transition Man." In the cartoon, Cason dons a wizard outfit supplied by worms (*gusanos* is Fidel's name for Cuban exiles). With a tap of his wand, he turns a free health care center into a private clinic. Then a gaggle of angry Cubans chase him away.

Reuters Photo Archive

The replica of a Cuban prison cell at the U.S. mission in Havana

Cason takes this in stride—he is having a T-shirt made with "Transition Man" on it—and ponders the prospects for a real transition. "There are a lot of reformists in the government," he notes. That bodes well. But first, Fidel must go. Cuba's 78-year-old Stalinist strongman rejects the Chinese model of market-friendly authoritarianism. His brother, Raúl Castro, the heir apparent, is said to have pro-China sympathies. He might prove Cuba's Deng Xiaoping. But then, asks Cason, "What if Raúl dies first?"

Either way, Cason, whose three-year tour ends next fall, probably won't be in Cuba for the morning after. When it comes, he argues, the U.S. embargo and travel ban will be vital tools for "leveraging" reform. Cason expects an initial post-Castro regime to feature "some kind of a collective decision-making body, heavily involving the military," that "may or may not have civilians, and may or may not someday have dissidents."

For now, Cuba's dissidents are anxiously preparing. On December 10, more than a dozen trekked to Cason's backyard to bury a time capsule. Their letters of advice to future citizens of a Cuban democracy went into the capsule, along with George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Václav Havel's *The Power of the Powerless*, various reports on Castro's abuses, President Bush's Cuba speech of May 20, 2002, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other pro-freedom literature. Cason's plan is that the capsule will be opened on the day all his efforts are directed toward: "the eve of the first democratic elections in Cuba." ♦

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The Inventor of Modern Conservatism

Disraeli and us

By David Gelernter

Benjamin Disraeli—twice prime minister of Great Britain, romantic novelist, inventor of modern conservatism—was a neocon in the plain sense of the word, a "new conservative" who began his career on the left. Conservative thinking dates to the dawn of organized society, but *modern* conservatism—a mass movement, a philosophy not for aristocrats and the rich but for everybody—was Disraeli's creation. That modern conservatism should have been invented by a 19th-century neocon is thought provoking. More surprising: His redefinition of conservatism is still fresh, and his political philosophy has never been more apt.

Conservatism is the most powerful and electric force in the American intellectual landscape. Young people no longer discover the left and get excited; they are far more likely to get their intellectual kicks discovering and experimenting with conservatism. But what exactly do conservatives believe? How do they resolve the seeming paradox that so many conservatives revere the past yet are also progressives, determined to move this nation forward and let it grow, stretch, and inhabit more and more of its own best self? Disraeli produced a definition of conservatism that resolves the problem. It is so terse and compelling, it ranks as a milestone of political thought.

He was a statesman who remodeled Europe and a thinker who examined some of the hardest of all political, social, and philosophical questions: How should democratic government work, what does party politics mean, where do the Jews fit in? I too "would lift up my voice to heaven, and ask," says the hero of his novel *Tancred*, "What is DUTY, and what is FAITH? What ought I to DO, and what ought I to BELIEVE?" On these and related questions, Disraeli said fantastically improbable things that would be easy to dismiss except that many of them are true.

Like nearly all successful politicians, he was a fine actor and first-rate manipulator, accustomed to saying things he didn't necessarily (wholly) believe. Like nearly all brilliant men, he could be hard to read. Like all celebrated wits and superstar parliamentarians, he was a champion improviser, superb at making things up as he went along. For all these reasons, historians tend to forget his passionate sincerity on the topics he cared about most: Britain, the Jews, the Tories, the government of England. No man ever left behind so many pregnant thoughts for his followers, admirers, and professional interpreters to ignore.

He was born a Jew, but his father had him baptized at age 13 in a fit of pique. Disraeli the elder (who spelled his name Isaac D'Israeli) was angry with the local synagogue for insisting that he serve as an officer and fining him when he refused. Isaac was a modestly well-off literary man who published *An Essay on the Manners and Genius of the Literary Character* in 1795, and several collections of short pieces on a grab bag of topics, from "The Chinese Language" to "The History of Gloves." They were popular in their day and are still charming and readable, literary snackfood of a high order. Lord Byron admired D'Israeli, and called him the author "whose works in general I have read oftener than perhaps those of any other English author whatever."

Unlike his father, Benjamin was religious by nature. He became a devout Christian. But nearly everyone regarded him as a Jew, and he agreed: He *was* a Jew, except theologically. As Disraeli saw things, "Jew" was a race—to which he was ferociously proud to belong. ("All is race," he wrote; "there is no other truth.") Bismarck captured the world's attitude to Disraeli at his height. The Iron Chancellor was not easily carried away. But at the Berlin Congress in 1878, where Europe's top statesmen were gathered glittering at the summit of European history, and Disraeli dominated the proceedings, Bismarck said: "*Der alte Jude,* das *ist der Mann*"—The old Jew, *that's* the man.

His "racial" Jewishness affected his worldview profoundly. Jewishness lovingly embraced though imperfectly understood taught him plenty. Taught him the meaning of defiance and honor, of winning against long odds and look-

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ing after your own. Taught him loyalty, the real nature of aristocracy, the all-importance of spiritual intangibles that rationalists, utilitarians, and modernists like to dismiss. All these things weighed heavily with Disraeli and, through him, helped shape modern politics, modern Britain, modern America, and the world of 2005.

He was born in 1804. He ran up debts as a young man that followed him deep into middle age. He wrote novels throughout his career; some made splashes, some were critical successes, some became famous—but none made big sales or big money until *Lothair*, which appeared when he was 65. He ran for Parliament and lost four times before he finally won in 1837. His maiden speech in the House of Commons was a famous fiasco. It was baroque and overblown—and (furthermore) Disraeli had brazenly offended an opposition clique earlier in the session; that was his *real* mistake. By the end of the speech he was all but drowned out by hoots, howls, and hisses. He finished with a celebrated promise, shouted at the top of his lungs so that people would hear: "Ay, sir, and though I sit down now, the time will come when you *will* hear me!"

In Parliament and the Tory party, he worked his passage by skill, nerve, and transcendent talent, facing down a fair (though not disabling) load of anti-Semitism along the way. When the Earl of Derby retired in 1868 and it was his turn at last to lead the party and become prime minister, some Tories grudged him his position. His first term as prime minister lasted only 11 months. The six years of his "great ministry" began in 1874, when he was 69 and starting to fail in health and strength. "Power came to him too late in life," his protégé T.E. Kebbel admits in his 1907 memoirs. Victoria created him Earl of Beaconsfield in 1876; he died in '81. Yet for all his tribulations, his career in the end was such a blowout triumph that "from the hour of his death," Lord Randolph Churchill (Winston's father) wrote, "every Tory, in and out of Parliament, high or low, rich or poor, had exclaimed, muttered or thought: 'Oh, if Lord Beaconsfield were alive!'" "Disraeli's life was a succession of surprises," the *Encyclopedia Britannica* of 1911 reports, "but none so great as that he should be remembered after death more widely, lastingly, respectfully, affectionately, than any other statesman in the long reign of Queen Victoria."

He was a wit. When the champagne appeared at a badly prepared banquet: "Thank God for something warm."

You could summarize his career, Lord Randolph thought, in a single sentence: "Failure, failure, failure, partial success, renewed failure, ultimate and complete triumph." The one ineffably sad thing about his life was that his beloved, devoted wife died in 1872, two years before he embarked at last on his triumphant great ministry.

If Disraeli had never become prime minister he would be famous anyway, for dreaming up modern conservatism and (some argue) the two-party system itself in its modern form. If he had never entered Parliament he would still be famous, for helping mold England's social conscience—which England passed on to America and the West.

He would be famous in other ways too. Robert Blake writes of Disraeli's two best-known novels, *Coningsby* and *Sybil*, that "he would be remembered for these if he had written nothing else and never become a minister." Gertrude Himmelfarb calls him co-inventor of the "social problem" novel; Isaiah Berlin names him "inventor of the political novel." His novels can be slapdash, but at their best they have the witty crystalline prose, the penetration and grace of F. Scott Fitzgerald at *his* best—although Disraeli (like Fitzgerald) was too apt to coast without pedaling, seduced by his own brilliance. ("When I want to read a novel," he said, "I write one.")

And he would be remembered, had he never entered politics, as a wit and a phrase-maker. When the champagne appeared at a badly prepared banquet: "Thank God for something warm." In a speech at Oxford: "Is man an ape or an angel? I, my lord, I am on the side of the angels." A man should retire when he reaches "his anecdotage." In an 1878 letter: "It is not the beginning of the end; it is the end of the beginning." (There is this and other evidence that Churchill read him closely.)

But above all Disraeli would be remembered, practical politics aside, as a thinker who grappled in his own way with the hardest problems of all.

What sort of man was he? Sara Austen, friend of his youth, writes revealingly that Disraeli was "so *actively kind*." (Her emphasis.) He did not merely have good intentions; he was a good man. He might have been the most tactful Briton of the 19th century. When the queen published some slight notes (*Leaves from*

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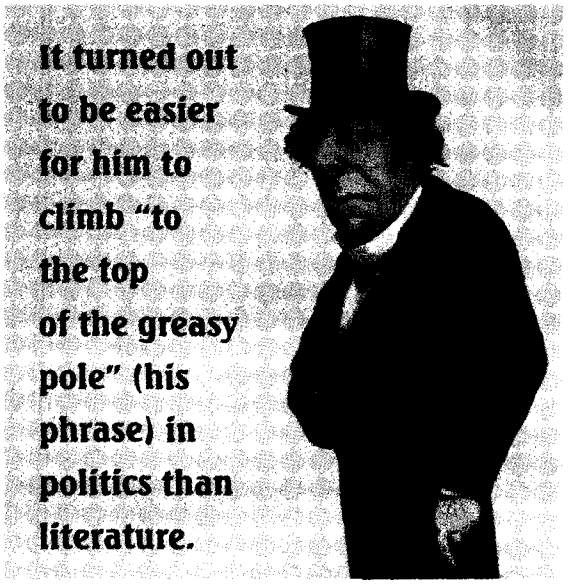
the Journal of our life in the Highlands), he found occasion to begin a sentence: "We authors, Ma'am . . . "—which evidently made a big impression. He once told his wife, who had stayed up late to serve him his favorite dinner upon his return from the House, "Why, my Dear, you are more like a mistress than a wife!" She told the story to Kebbel, and "I could see," Kebbel writes, "that she took it as a very high compliment indeed." Naturally.

Ordinarily he is evaluated against his great Liberal rival William Ewart Gladstone. But the two are incomparable. Gladstone was a politician, albeit deep and principled. Disraeli was a visionary man of letters, best understood in relation to such thinkers as John Milton and William Blake. Granted he was no great artist, but like Milton and Blake, he was a great man—and in some ways, the three thought along similar lines. They were masters of the English language (Disraeli's best genre was the partially impromptu parliamentary speech). They were each obsessed with God and prophecy, with England and her relationship to Israel.



Those who see Disraeli as an anomaly (a *Jewish Tory* prime minister?) should remember Britain's long, deep obsession with classical Hebrew civilization during an intensely "formative" period. They should recall Milton's explaining, in *Paradise Regained*, that Israel's prophets are "Men divinely taught, and better teaching / The solid rules of civil government, / In their majestic, unaffected style, / Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome." They should recall Blake's *Jerusalem*, whose theme is the marriage (understood on many levels) of Jerusalem and Albion. Should recall Blake imagining himself the prophet Elijah and proclaiming,

> *Bring me my Bow of burning gold:*
> *Bring me my Arrows of desire:*
> *Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!*
> *Bring me my Chariot of fire.*
>
> *I will not cease from Mental Fight,*
> *Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand*
> *Till we have built Jerusalem*
> *In England's green & pleasant Land.*

Among such men as Blake and Milton, Disraeli and his obsession with Judaism and Christianity, with Israel and England, is right at home.

Disraeli saw "Jew" as, first and foremost, a nationality or race. The world having visited on them "every term of obloquy and every form of persecution," he wrote in his *Biography of Lord George Bentinck*, the Jews are, notwithstanding, "the human family that has contributed most to human happiness." Of course he felt deeply about Britain too: "Zeal for the greatness of England was the passion of his life" (thus his foreign minister, and the future prime minister, Lord Salisbury). Disraeli wrote in *Tancred*: "The general condition of England is superior to that of any other country"; "there is more political freedom, more social happiness, more sound religion, and more material prosperity among us, than in any nation in the world."

Pride is basic not merely to his character but to his worldview. He admired the English aristocracy but he was positive that, on their own terms, he outranked them. The main theme of *Tancred* (notes Cecil Roth) is "the essential aristocracy of the Jewish people." Kebbel remarks that Disraeli "believed himself to possess a pedigree compared with which the pedigrees of the oldest families in Christendom were as things of yesterday."

"Yes, I am a Jew," he explained not over-subtly to a politician who had attacked him on that account, "and when the ancestors of the right honorable gentleman were brutal savages in an unknown island, mine were priests in the temple of Solomon." His over-the-top pride, set against widespread Jewish self-hatred of the sort embodied by (for example) Marx or (nowadays) Noam Chomsky, is intensely refreshing—a cool dip on a hot day. Too bad so many Jewish intellectuals are afraid of the water. Take Isaiah Berlin, who breaks out the sneer-quotes to mock Disraeli for conceiving himself "lifted above the teeming multitude by the genius of a 'great' race." No doubt Berlin would have rated America, too, not great but merely "great"—or was he afraid to exult in Jewish genius lest his gentile friends not like him any more? Berlin is long dead, but many thousands like him live on. Who needs anti-Semites when so many Jewish scholars attribute a robust interest in Jewish achievement not to pride but to "insecurity"—a disease with which they seem suspiciously familiar?

Pride in Britain drove Disraeli's foreign policy as prime minister. His first foreign policy success, according to the 1911 *Britannica*, "was the restoration [to Britain] of a much-

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damaged self-respect." Disraeli went to the Congress of Berlin determined that Britain's slipping prestige in Europe should be restored and her voice heard and her will respected. It is no accident that his once-opponent John Roebuck should have announced, on the PM's return, that "England now holds as proud a position as she has ever held, and that is due to the sagacity, and power, and conduct of the despised person once called Benjamin Disraeli but now Lord Beaconsfield."

Disraeli was a bullfighter-of-the-spirit who loved and admired the British public as a bullfighter loves and admires the bull—but was determined to master it, break it to his will. His ambition was gigantic and almost (but not quite) all-consuming. "There is no incentive to exertion," he announces in *Tancred*, "like the passion for a noble renown." It turned out to be easier for him to climb "to the top of the greasy pole" (his phrase) in politics than literature, and so he devoted his best efforts to molding and leading Britain's Tory party.

Genius *is* defiance. He got caught up once in an altercation with an Irish politician who finished by slinging anti-Semitic slurs—and who had forsworn dueling; so Disraeli called out the man's son, and worked hard to bring the duel about. In the end the law stepped in and prevented it. But no less a personage than the Duke of Wellington commended Disraeli's behavior (Cecil Roth reports) as "the most damned gentleman-like thing" he had heard of for some time. What struck the public at first as mere reckless publicity-seeking came to seem, in time, like reckless bravery. When he died, "courage" is the virtue for which his archenemy Gladstone chose to praise him. His philosophy amounts to a Metaphysics of Pride.

* * *

We can't picture the man truly unless we know that women obsessed him his whole life. (And he obsessed them.) He was dark, handsome, exotic-looking—"strikingly handsome," according to an 1895 account, "with an air of easy grace." ("All the women are on my side," he wrote a female friend of his ill-starred first try for Parliament in 1832.) In youth he was a sharp dresser to the point of absurdity; when he grew older and went into Parliament, he got a grip and emerged as a model of good taste. By 1844 he felt able, in describing one of his characters in *Coningsby*, to mention "his dress rich and effeminate." That was Disraeli all over, baiting the public, reminding it that his own clothes had been "rich and effeminate" once; daring people to make something of it. Teasing the *toro* of public opinion like a master bullfighter who has been gored repeatedly but come back stronger.

As a young man he scored some torrid love affairs, but in 1839 he married an older woman, carefully explaining that he was doing it for her money. Then he fell in love with her—so devoutly that their marriage remains a paradigm in the high-pressure world of high-stakes politics. His novel *Sybil* is dedicated to "the most severe of critics, but—a perfect Wife!"

We picture him in middle age with his kindly, moist, knowing, nearsighted eyes, his face that seems more Jewish by the month, his quickness that can take your breath away if he feels like it. He listens to his own sentences like a connoisseur: loves hearing himself talk, especially to women; is a sought-out listener, too. Retails gossip with winning enjoyment.

In old age he grows silent. He is an international celebrity, absolute center of attention wherever he appears. But he can sit for hours at a dinner party and say not a single word. His forehead is high, face lined, demeanor quiet and tired, eyes deep-set, quizzical, nearsighted as always, wistful.

When he died there was a startling outburst of national mourning. "No such demonstration of grief was expected," reports the 1911 *Britannica*, "even by those who grieved the most."

Benjamin Disraeli is the founding father of modern conservatism as it exists in Britain and, arguably, throughout the Western world. But why was he a conservative? How did this quintessential outsider come to lead Britain's Tories, once the insider's party par excellence?

He entered politics as an independent with radical tendencies. In some respects he held radical views his whole life. But he was elected to Parliament as a Conservative, and remained a Tory forever after. Why Conservative? people asked, and still do. A Jewish writer who anguished over poverty, believed in democracy and condemned (in prophetic language) the evils of "exclusion"? Isaiah Berlin explains that Disraeli's conservatism was phony but not hypocritical, because he was taken in by his own act. "He was an actor, and he became one with his act: the mask became one with his features: second nature replaced first." Which is too clever by half. Yes, Disraeli was an actor; he was an actor who happened to love and honor tradition—and so he *had* to be a Tory. (And he was hardly the first Jew, as he pointed out himself, to love and honor tradition.)

In Disraeli's youth, Tories were the Church of England, country-squire party; Whigs were associated with Puritans and religious dissenters, with the trading towns and manufacturing centers and the great grasping, sprawling capital city. But the Reform Act of 1832 put Britain for the first time (a mere 60-odd years after the Declaration of Independence) on the road to democracy and changed the shape of politics.

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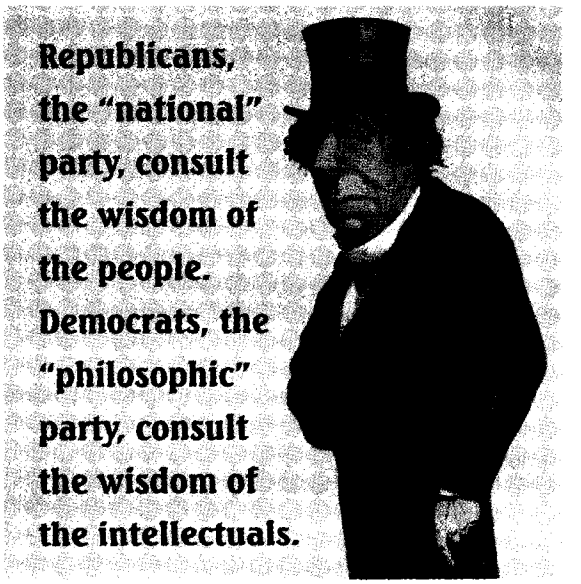
Before 1832, Britain's Conservative party was a rich man's party, promoting the interests of wealthy landowners. Such a party was plausible so long as Parliament was chosen by a tiny, monied subset of the population. Although the 1832 reform did not establish democracy—it enlarged the franchise to a point where roughly one in five adult males could vote—it made clear that Britain was *headed towards* democracy and would get there eventually. Obviously no "rich man's party" can prevail in a democracy. However prosperous the nation, the rich are never a majority. The Tory party had to change or face slow, painful death as democracy came on strong.

Notice that Democrats in America insist to this day that Republicans, like pre-1832 British Tories, are the "party of the rich." John Edwards made this a major theme of his 2004 campaign. But the idea makes no sense. If it were true, Republicans could only win elections if the public were stupid—granted, a hypothesis many Democrats can live with.



Post-1832, Britain's Tories had two main alternatives. They could turn themselves into a watered-down version of the opposition or become something brand new. Disraeli believed in the second alternative. He wanted the Tories to care about poverty, favor democracy, be "inclusive," and hold the nation's traditions in deep romantic reverence—in other words, be just like him. But his wants were irrelevant unless he could win control of his party.

Which he did, by one of the strangest maneuvers in British parliamentary history. The 1832 Reform Act was a Whig measure and a huge popular success. The Tories emerged bewildered and stymied, like 1990s Republicans after a run-in with Bill Clinton. Sir Robert Peel became their leader; Peel, writes G.M. Trevelyan (who published his classic *History of England* in the 1920s), "reconstituted a 'Conservative' party out of the wreckage of the 'Tory' party destroyed by the Reform bill." But Peel's was a pale pastel Toryism, a watered-down Whiggism that attracted some Whigs but inspired no one. "Tory men and Whig measures," Disraeli called it—like the administration of Richard Nixon, or the views of Northeastern Republicans.

Peel became prime minister in August 1841 after the Whigs lost a vote of confidence and then a general election. With Peel and his weak-tea conservatives running the show, Disraeli was a mere disgruntled back-bencher, no better than "a dark horse" (his phrase) for party leadership. But his moment arrived (unexpectedly) in 1846, when Peel decided to abolish the corn laws, import duties on grain. Free trade was a Whig-style issue. In promoting it, Peel was ignoring the most devoted and rock-ribbed Tories—who despised free trade (they wanted protection from cheap foreign grain) and were accordingly primed for revolt. Disraeli was no lover of the corn laws but saw his chance to beat Peel by leading the pro-corn-law rebellion. Despite opposition from his own party, Peel succeeded in abolishing the corn laws. But soon afterwards, the Tory rebels abolished him.

Disraeli's maneuver split the party. The government fell, Peel resigned, and the Whigs took over. "Riven in twain on the Free Trade question," say Arnold Wright and Philip Smith in their colorful *Parliament Past and Present* (1895), "the conservatives sat on opposite sides of the House—the [Tory] Protectionists sharing the Liberal benches with the Whigs and Radicals, and the [Tory] Peelites taking their place on the opposition benches." (The layout of the House of Commons forces everyone literally to choose a side.) Disraeli had deliberately driven the jalopy of Toryism off a cliff. It was a cool 28 years before the Conservatives once again commanded a clear House of Commons majority. That gave him the time he needed to refashion the wreckage into a new kind of Toryism.

Although he had used pro-corn-law sentiment to beat Peel, he soon admitted that these protectionist laws were dead ducks and couldn't possibly be revived. Some called his reversal unprincipled, which was fair up to a point. But Disraeli's real grievance was that Peel lacked *vision*, lacked any sense of what Toryism could become. Disraeli was Newt Gingrich taking control of the House Republicans for philosophic reasons but not by philosophic methods.

Disraeli created the new Conservative party in opposition—and while he was at it, created the modern idea of an "opposition party." Blake calls him "perhaps the first politician systematically to uphold the doctrine that it is the duty of the Opposition to oppose. Indeed, he might be said by this practice to have established a precedent on which all subsequent Opposition leaders have acted."

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No matter what the issue, if the government was *pro*, Disraeli felt obliged to be *con*. "Above all maintain the line of demarcation between parties," Disraeli said, "for it is only by maintaining the independence of party that you can maintain the integrity of public men, and the power and influence of Parliament itself." He believed that a party must stand for a consistent, coherent worldview—not for an incoherent parade of tactical decisions with no overarching purpose or underlying philosophy. A party in the age of expanding democracy must write its principles in bold block letters, plainly and clearly. (Not a bad idea even today.)

But there were two reservations. Disraeli saw his duty as opposition, never obstruction; never to prevent the House from voting. Furthermore, when the nation was at war, the opposition was duty bound to support the war effort. Disraeli disliked the Crimean War and said so, but assured the House that no English general fighting abroad would face any opposition effort "to depreciate his efforts and to ridicule his talents" so long as he was in charge.

Thus Disraeli found himself in a position to rebuild the Tory party. How did he go about it? Reverence for tradition was central to Toryism and to Disraeli's own personality. He wanted his new-style Tory party to embody respect for tradition—wanted it to be new *and* old, to be a modern setting for ancient gems, a new crown displaying old jewels. This was a popular idea in 19th-century Britain, where "the future" and "the past" were both discovered, simultaneously.

Disraeli's approach was like Barry and Pugin's in designing a new home for Parliament. The old one burned to the ground (except for a magnificent medieval hall and a few odds and ends) in 1834. The new structure, it was decided, should be built of modern materials and work like a modern building with all the conveniences—but should *look* medieval. The intention wasn't play-acting or aesthetic fraud; it was to use the best ideas of the past and present alongside each other.

The result was wildly successful, one of history's greatest public buildings. Disraeli aimed to accomplish something similar for the Tory party. His underlying thought, which defined Disraeli-type Toryism and reshaped conservatism for all time, was that the Conservative party was the *national* party. Sounds simple and is. But everything else followed. If you understood "national" properly, then (on the one hand) the Tories must be a democratic, "universal," progressive party that cared about the poor and working classes—since the party was *national* it must care for the *whole nation*, for all classes. But the Tories must also be a patriotic party that revered ancient traditions and institutions, again inasmuch as they were the *national*—and therefore honored profoundly the nation's heritage and distinctive character.

He put it like this:

> In a progressive country change is constant; and the great question is not whether you should resist change which is inevitable, but whether that change should be carried out in deference to the manners, the customs, the laws and the traditions of a people, or whether it should be carried out in deference to abstract principles, and arbitrary and general doctrines.

(Which is exactly the issue that divides Republicans and Democrats today.) If Tories were "national," the Liberal party was ("to give it an epithet," he said, "a noble epithet—which it may perhaps deserve") the "*philosophic*" party.

In his *Vindication of the English Constitution* he explained that "the Tory party in this country is the national party; it is the really democratic party of England." The "national" party is the inclusive, universal party—"universal" meaning "all classes of Britain." "If we must find new forces to maintain the ancient throne and immemorial monarchy of England," he said in Parliament, "I for one hope that we may find that novel power in the invigorating energies of an educated and enfranchised people." According to one school of opinion (Cecil Roth reports), had Disraeli lived and got another shot at the premiership in the 1880s, he would have "extended the franchise to women, this being according to *The Times* of June 13th 1884, the 'trump Conservative card' which he kept up his sleeve."

Thus the radical new idea of "Tory Democracy" (not Disraeli's phrase but his idea)—conservatism by and for the man in the street: Teddy Roosevelt conservatism, JFK conservatism, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan conservatism, the conservatism that has been so potent in modern Britain and America. JFK fits the pattern beautifully: people's man, tough stand-up-for-America man, lady's man—so to speak. But *did* Disraeli influence JFK? Like nearly every politician of his generation, Kennedy was deeply influenced by Churchill, who was deeply influenced by his father, who was deeply influenced by Dizzy.

As Disraeli saw it, liberals and conservatives were equally progressive. But liberals were rational internationalists who worried what the Germans would say. Conservatives were romantic nationalists who worried what their forefathers would have said. (Thus "national" Republicans invoke the wisdom of the people and the authority of the Founding Fathers. "Philosophic" Democrats invoke the wisdom of the intellectuals and the authority of the United Nations.)

Designing this new-old Tory party posed hard problems: How to preserve the Tories' heartfelt devotion to tradition and ancient institutions, but add an equally fervent

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belief in democracy? The "national" party was perfect. And for Disraeli the idea came naturally. There was nothing forced about his use of "nationality" or the enormous mystical significance he attached to the idea. He had always felt just this way about his own Jewish nationality, which played (in his own life) a role of deep mystical significance. Hard-headed but profoundly spiritual nationalism came naturally to him as a Jew, and turned out to be exactly the right basis for a new, progressive conservatism.

Given Disraeli's ideas and principles, how did he govern? His credentials as a progressive were just as strong as Gladstone's, and Disraeli dismissed the idea that Liberals were in any way, shape, or form more "compassionate" than Conservatives. Disraeli and Thomas Carlyle were two prominent Tory thinkers who lit into the reactionary poor law of 1834: "Carlyle and Disraeli jeered at the statisticians who thought the condition of the poor could be measured in wages and prices, food consumption and longevity," Gertrude Himmelfarb writes. She calls Dickens's *Hard Times*, Disraeli's *Sybil*, and two novels by Elizabeth Gaskell "archetypes" of the brand new "social-problem novel." "What *Sybil* and *Hard Times* share," she writes, is a "sense of verisimilitude that spills over even into their rather melodramatic and satirical passages. . . . Even [Disraeli's] critics paid tribute to his zeal as a social reporter, his attempt to seek out the best evidence on the condition-of-the-people question."

Disraeli was a social-conscience man—who connected compassion and social justice with Judaism. "The Saxon, the Sclav [sic], and the Celt," he wrote in *Lord Bentinck*, "have adopted most of the laws and many of the customs of these Arabian tribes"—by which he meant the Jews; "all their literature and all their religion. They are therefore indebted to them for much that regulates, much that charms, and much that solaces existence. The toiling multitude rest every seventh day by virtue of a Jewish law." And so on.

Unsurprisingly, domestic legislation enacted during Disraeli's "great ministry" constitutes (according to Blake) "the biggest installment of social reform passed by any one government in the nineteenth century." Some historians point out that Disraeli himself was only marginally involved in the actual legislation; the details were all worked out by his enterprising Home Secretary Richard Cross. But after all, Disraeli was old and tired by the late 1870s, and there was no mistaking his intentions. He had been writing and talking about them in public and private, in novels and essays, as a back- and front-bencher, in government and opposition, on the floor of the House and on platforms all over the country for nearly half a century.

Just as he saw "nationality" as a mystical attribute shared by every Briton, he saw the peerage and monarchy as national institutions that belonged to every Briton. He democratized not only the Tory party but the British monarchy. The titled nobility, he believed, were ombudsmen of the people—they alone among rich Englishmen had a duty and could be counted on to look out for the whole nation. Here once again his Jewish background played a role in his political thinking. The Jews were Europe's true aristocracy. Therefore, as a self-appointed member of the club, he looked benignly on England's titled nobility even before he was created Earl of Beaconsfield (and later, like Churchill and not many other Britons, was offered and turned down a dukedom).

When the "great ministry" began, Disraeli's focus switched to foreign affairs. He became Lord Beaconsfield two years into the six-year period. Monypenny and Buckle, authors of the standard Disraeli biography (first published in six volumes between 1910 and 1920), write that "the name Disraeli" suggests "the destroyer of Peel, the re-creator of the Conservative Party . . . the promoter of Tory Democracy. The name Beaconsfield has quite other associations . . . the imperial and European statesman, the faithful custodian of his country's interests at a critical epoch in international politics, the leading figure at a European Congress."

His devotion to Judaism put him in vague, romantic awe of The East. (He referred to Jews as "Arabian" or "Asian," to Jewish wisdom as the "Asian wisdom" by which Europe lived.) He was fascinated by Britain's holdings in India. (A character in *Tancred* casually proposes that the seat of the British Empire should be transferred from London to Delhi.) Once again big consequences followed from his infatuations.

Disraeli became "the regenerator and representative of the Imperial idea in England," reports the 1911 *Britannica*. Cecil Roth writes that "his intuition, or almost vision, of a new relation between England and her overseas possessions" made him "the second founder of the British Empire in its modern sense"—"modern" meaning an Empire fated to convert itself eventually into a "Commonwealth" of independent states.

He made Victoria "Empress of India." (To adopt this title was a suggestion he did not intend for her to take quite seriously. But she did, quite seriously.) His goal was a closer relation between the Indian people and the sovereign, who would take it upon herself to guarantee personally that their laws and religions would be respected. He acquired a large stake in the Suez Canal company for Britain, in part to protect Britain's route to India. He was determined to keep Russia out of Constantinople, partly because he believed that a Russian Constantinople would threaten the route to India. His views on Constantinople, and his deter-

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mination that Britain should reassert her influence in Europe, led to his triumph at the Congress of Berlin—which peacefully redrew the map of Europe and did in fact keep the Russians out of Constantinople (or Istanbul)—of which they remain non-owners today. "A few years back, it was fashionable to decry his policy," Cecil Roth wrote in 1951—"a reaction against the earlier stage of patriotic glorification. But had it not succeeded, Russia would certainly have had long since her Mediterranean outlet, with incalculable consequences to the history of the world."

What of Disraeli's ideas? How do they hold up, and where do they stand today? A *nationality* for Disraeli is a state of mind or sensibility or consciousness emerging out of the measureless past. (Its essence being a state of mind, it cannot easily be communicated in words, any more than a religious state of mind can be.) An individual might or might not be sensitive enough to tune in this "broadcast," to hear it and resonate with it. "Hear the voice of the Bard!" says William Blake,

> *Who Present, Past & Future sees;*
> *Whose ears have heard The Holy Word*
> *That walk'd among the ancient trees.*

Disraeli, for one, heard music in the rustling train of time (as she sweeps grandly forward). If you are sensitive enough to "tune in" your own nationality—to be aware of your history and forebears and ancient institutions—you make yourself part of a living organism; take your place in a continuum—a living thing that was born when your nation was born and will live for as long as *it* lives. For Disraeli, liberalism is (merely) rational and reasonable. Conservatism, being *national*, is poetic and passionate.

One consequence among many: Schoolchildren (Disraeli believed) are natural Tories. During the last generation or two, many Americans figured that youthful idealism made for Democrats and left-wingers automatically. Disraeli saw things just the other way: You are driven to make society better not by ideology but by sense of duty, your sense of oneness with the nation and its history. A romantic idea, he freely admits; the sort of thing that appeals to schoolchildren. Duty and honor were central to Disraeli's worldview. His proudest achievement, after all, was to bring home what he called "peace with honor" from the Berlin Congress. He was no warmonger; he called the Crimean War "just but unnecessary." But he did believe in peace through strength, through courage, through unqualified readiness to do your duty and (if need be) display your valor—ideas that the young once found appealing, intimately tied up as they are with romance and eros. And today, America's young people are indeed—at least by some calculations—more conservative than their elders.

The Liberal says, in despairing disbelief: Can't you sense the world around us? Don't you care about its disapproval? The Conservative says, in despairing disbelief: Can't you sense the generations behind us? Don't you care about *their* disapproval? Liberals live "horizontally," spiritually in touch (they believe) with all the world's nations. Conservatives live "vertically," spiritually in touch (*they* believe) with their forebears and with generations to come.

Marx and Disraeli are perfect countertypes—partly the same, partly opposite (like particle and anti-particle in nuclear physics; when they meet, they destroy each other). Marx and Disraeli are the principal creators of the modern left and right respectively—two 19th-century Jews whose fathers had them baptized, who worked mainly in London, who counted on British power to protect the world from a dangerous Czarist Russia, who died within two years of each other, in 1881 (Disraeli) and '83 (Marx). They were both obsessed with Jews and Judaism, but Marx (the atheist left-winger) hated Jews, Judaism, and religion in general; Disraeli (the devout right-winger) felt differently.

Marx says, "Workers of the world, unite!" Disraeli says, Peoples of Britain, unite! Marx foresees one class united around the world. Disraeli envisions all classes united throughout the nation. Socialists had "internationals," but conservatives never felt any need to blend their national parties into transnational organizations.

Yet Marx-to-Disraeli is not finally a left-to-right spectrum. Marx gave birth not only to the modern left but to totalitarianism. Marx's end of the spectrum is the "shame end," Disraeli's the "pride end." Shame was a powerful force in Marx's life; witness his self-hating anti-Semitism. Twentieth-century totalitarianism was created (not *only* but in large part) by shame. Stalinist Russia *and* Nazi Germany were born out of humiliating defeat in the First World War: Germany beat Russia (Russian communism followed); the allies beat Germany (Nazism followed). Defeat and shame were not the only forces at work, but we can't understand the 20th century without them. Nor can we understand today's radical Islamic terrorism and totalitarianism (totalitarians being terrorists who have already got what they want) without understanding the central role of defeat and shame.

Modern liberals are nothing like Bolsheviks or Nazis. They are closer to Disraeli's end of the spectrum than Marx's. Yet American liberals *are* more likely than conservatives to focus on the shameful in American history, conservatives on the things that make them proud.

One final Disraeli mystery: If he felt so strongly about Judaism, why did he spend his life as a Christian? It was all a mistake. (Albeit, in some ways, a lucky one.)

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On religious grounds as on so many others, he was a rare bird. Converts from Judaism to Christianity are usually hostile to one or the other—either to Christianity (which they felt forced for some reason to adopt) or Judaism (which they shucked off the first chance they got). *Or* they are indifferent to religion altogether. But Disraeli as usual was none of the above. He was a loyal and devoted Jew who loved Christianity. He was a serious, devout Christian capable of saying (through a character in a novel): "We agree that half Christendom worships a Jewess, and the other half a Jew. Now let me ask one more question. Which is the superior race, the worshiped or the worshippers?" (The distortion of Christian doctrine is deliberate, designed to make a point.) At the same time Nietzsche was inventing something called "our Judeo-Christian heritage," mainly to disparage it, Disraeli came closer than anyone ever has to fleshing out the idea and embodying it in his own thought.

Nonetheless: If he *did* love Judaism, why did he not return to it? He spoke up loud and clear for a Jew's right to sit in Parliament. But when he was first elected, Jews had yet to win that right. Had he remained Jewish, his political career might have died in the womb. But he was a proud, courageous, defiant man. If he had concluded that Judaism was right for him, he would have been unable to keep himself from leaping back in with both feet. He didn't because of a mistake; he was misinformed.

Monypenny and Buckle write of "Disraeli's great conception of Christianity as completed Judaism." Theologically, this was his central belief. The Hebrew Bible was sublime but incomplete. He was struck by the fact that Jesus, asked to summarize Christianity, cited two verses from the Hebrew Bible; in ethical terms Christianity, he believed, boils down to Judaism. Yet he also believed that the Hebrew Bible *could not* be the basis of a modern religion all by itself. Its basic ideas are right for all time, but the details were intended only for Jews of the distant past. Softening, mellowing, *tempering* were called for to turn this rough powerful steel into a safe instrument for the modern world. This Jewish sword had to be beaten into a universal plowshare. And if Jews would only just *accept* this (so painfully obvious!) truth, they would understand that the New Testament is the essential *completion* of the Hebrew Bible. And naturally they would all become Christian.

The strange irony is that Jews *do* accept the main part of this argument and always have. They have always regarded the Hebrew Bible as "incomplete." Have always regarded the idea that you could base your whole life on it as naive and wrong. But normative Judaism regards the Talmud, the "spoken Torah," as possessing the same sanctity and canonicity as the Hebrew Bible (or "written Torah"). Under this doctrine, the Talmud accomplishes what Disraeli conceived the New Testament as accomplishing. *Exactly*.

The Talmud is the "New Testament" of the Jews. The analogy is precise. Jews have no need for a New Testament because they already have one. Disraeli misunderstood, but pointed the way (accidentally) to a deep religious truth.

He was gigantic. Even his mistakes were gigantic. One of the largest unplowed fields in modern scholarship is classical Israel's deep influence on the development of modern Britain and America. Fania Oz-Salzberger has done important work on the monumental influence of the Hebrew Bible and (in some cases) post-Biblical rabbinics on such seminal English political thinkers as John Selden, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke. She has also pointed out the ways in which this influence tends to be edited out of modern intellectual history. Recently the Shalem Center in Jerusalem sponsored a conference on "Political Hebraism" that dealt with many of these same issues. Disraeli's career is a hint that in this particular field, much material awaits excavation. The more one ponders the evidence, the more Jewish ideas—modern and ancient—emerge as basic to the modern state.

Two of Disraeli's central interests, patriotism and democracy, were important to George Bush's 2004 victory. In this nation *the people* and not the courts are meant to lay out the moral and social foundations of society, subject only to constitutional absolutes. When anti-democratic judges and elected officials decide to update America's moral code on their own authority, *the people* get upset. Democracy in America has been hurt badly where it counts most. Disraeli knew well and said often: Nothing counts more than society's moral foundations. Next to that, all other issues are small change.

Patriotism favors Republicans on a deeper level than many of them seem to realize. No one questions the personal patriotism of Democratic leaders. The real question is different: Where do you rank patriotism as a public virtue? Anyone who has looked at young people nowadays (in the Blue States especially) knows that, since we no longer *teach* them to be patriotic, many of these Blue State Specials no longer *are*. No country has the luxury of not speaking up for itself to its own children in its own schools. For a generation and more, we in the wealthy, influential, profoundly self-important Blue Regions have run our schools as if we were too sophisticated for any such low-brow, cornball drivel as teaching children to love their country. If this nation is serious about defeating terrorism, we must teach our children *why we fight*. From where I stand, we are not doing it—at least, not in Connecticut. The conservative party should be the *national* party, Disraeli said, and he knew what he was talking about. ♦

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The Axis of Oil

China and Russia find a new way to advance their strategic ambitions.

By Irwin M. Stelzer

A cold weather wave hits America's northeast, oil inventories are drawn down, and prices rise. A pipeline is blown up in Iraq, and prices rise even more. The OPEC cartel meets and agrees to cut back production, adding to price pressures. The government announces a rise in inventories, or weather forecasters predict a thaw, or the Saudis say they will step up oil production, and prices fall. All interesting, all important to those playing the oil market or running companies that rely heavily on oil as an input, or trying to predict the course of their economies.

But these hardy perennials of the business pages will soon seem trivial next to the structural changes occurring in the international oil industry. Start with the much-overlooked fact that President Bush's inaugural address was nothing less than a repudiation of a deal cut 60 years ago by President Franklin Roosevelt with Saudi king Ibn Saud. FDR took a detour en route to Washington from the Yalta conference to meet with Saud aboard the USS *Quincy*, anchored in the Great Bitter Lake in the Suez Canal. "The official record was surprisingly silent about what the two men said about oil," notes Daniel Yergin in his magisterial *The Prize: The Epic Quest For Oil, Money & Power*, and Roosevelt died before he could make a full report. But no one doubted that the president had pledged U.S. support for the Saudi regime in return for Saud's promise of a steady flow of oil onto world markets.

It is certainly arguable that the Saudis reneged on their end of the bargain long before Bush decided to consign the Bitter Lake arrangement to the dustbin of history. After all, their "guarantee" of a continued flow became inoperative when they joined the producers' embargo in 1973. More recently, they abandoned their reasonable-price pledge by allowing oil prices to shoot up without making any effort to expand production capacity. Nor can it be said that a regime that uses its oil revenues to fund the export of the virulent version of Islam that produced almost all of the terrorists who perpetrated the atrocities of September 11, and that pays bounties to the families of suicide bombers, is behaving in the way Roosevelt anticipated when he shook hands with Ibn Saud.

But if Saudi behavior is not a deal-breaker, George W. Bush's inaugural broadside against tyranny—against "governments with long habits of control"—certainly is, unless the long-standing Bush family relationship with the Saudis trumps the president's pledge. If Bush means what he says, and he usually does, he cannot favor the existing regime over such reform elements as might begin to emerge in Saudi Arabia. The kingdom will remain an important supplier of oil to the U.S. and world markets, and America will remain an important consumer of that oil, but it will be barrels-for-dollars from here on out, with no hidden promises to shore up the Saudi regime unless those threatening to replace it are an even greater threat to American interests. Which should please those eager to distance America from the odious House of Saud.

But hold the applause. America remains highly dependent on Saudi oil, the production of which is controlled by state-owned Aramco, an instrument of the Saudi government's foreign policy. Aramco is about 20 times the size of BP or Exxon Mobil, the largest private-sector oil companies. And Aramco is only one of the increasingly powerful state-owned players that are putting America not only at an increasing economic disadvantage, but at risk of losing a good deal of its diplomatic leverage in Asia, Europe, and the Western Hemisphere.

The end, if that is what it is, of the U.S.-Saudi special relationship is only one of the profound changes that are occurring in the oil market. Other developments make a break with the Saudis even more risky than it would ordinarily be, as our supplies of oil become subject to a complicated set of international games. For we are witnessing what might be called the geopoliticization of the world's oil and gas industry.

Given past government interference, whether it was the Texas government trying to keep prices high by restricting output in the early days, or the OPEC cartel

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doing the same in recent times, it can't be said that the free play of supply and demand ever set prices in the oil market. But we are now seeing an even more profound uncoupling of the oil industry from anything resembling the model characteristic of market economies. Governments rather than traditional commercial enterprises are increasingly taking control. And those governments often have interests quite hostile to ours.

The Chinese are desperate to secure supplies of oil to sustain an economic growth rate that is crowding double digits and that converted them into a net importer of oil in 1993. That means, first of all, forging closer economic and political ties in the Middle East. The Iran-China Chamber of Commerce, established in 2000, reports that trade between the two countries totaled $7 billion last year, a 25 percent increase over the previous year. But this is not the ordinary buying and selling of profit-driven companies. Instead, it is the result of state-owned companies in China buying oil from state-owned companies in Iran, in transactions aimed as much at mutual political advantage as at commerce. China buys oil and funds a U.S. adversary; Iran sells oil, and in return gets help with the nuclear weapons program that worries America. Score: Adversaries, 2; U.S., nil.

The China Petroleum & Chemical Company (Sinopec) also signed a 30-year natural gas purchase deal to help the mullahs get their gas industry moving and agreed to invest in the development of the Yadavaran oil field in return for Iran's agreement to sell it 150,000 barrels per day of crude oil. So much for U.S. trade sanctions.

The advantages to Iran of closer ties with China are obviously not restricted to payments received for oil. As Gal Luft and Anne Korin pointed out last year in *Commentary*, China "has sold ballistic-missile components to Iran as well as air-, land-, and sea-based cruise missiles. . . . Even more significantly, China has provided Iran with key ingredients for the development of nuclear weapons," and China's Fiber-Home Communications Technology is building a broadband network in Iran.

When Sinopec agreed to spend $300 million to develop natural gas resources in Saudi Arabia, "the deal raised eyebrows for its high risk and potentially low returns," reported the *New York Times*. Sure, the Chinese would like to find some natural gas. But most experts say that if Sinopec had to justify this transaction purely on commercial terms, as would an American company, the deal never would have been consummated. Or, as the *Wall Street Journal* puts it, "State-owned firms will have a higher risk appetite when buying assets than their listed counterparts." The Sinopec deal was aimed mainly at establishing a larger Chinese presence in the Middle East. And a market for products that are on America's list of embargoed items. The Sino-Saudi oil-for-arms trade has included the sale by China of ballistic missiles with a range of 1,800 miles and capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, according to Luft and Korin.

China clearly aims to position itself as an alternative to America as an ally and armorer of countries that oppose U.S. foreign policy. Amy Myers Jaffe, a fellow at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University, told the *New York Times* that the Chinese "tend toward countries where the U.S. has sanctions like Sudan, Iran and Iraq." She might have added that China also tends towards countries that are key suppliers of the oil that keeps the wheels of American commerce turning.

China is not confining the extension of its influence to the Middle East. The Western Hemisphere is also in its sights. Canadian prime minister Paul Martin just visited Beijing and came away with a broad-ranging deal to cooperate in a wide variety of energy projects, including plans for a pipeline and ports that would allow as much as one million barrels per day of oil from Alberta's tar sands to move to Canada's west coast for export to China. That's one-third of the oil that America has been hoping might in the future be available to it from Canada's tar sands.

And, as always, there was more to the deal than a mere commercial transaction between consenting nations. According to their joint communiqué, the Strategic Working Group set up by Canada and China will not only broaden their energy relationship. In addition, in what can only be a shot at Washington, "Canada and China share the view that the United Nations and other multilateral institutions have an essential role to play in the development of a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world." Little wonder that American officials have announced that they are "monitoring the talks," diplomatese for "sweating profusely."

In Latin America, China has made a series of oil deals that extend its influence, and must have James Monroe spinning in his grave. President Hu Jintao has agreed to invest $100 billion in Latin America in a variety of energy-related and other partnerships, as Latin American countries "try to lessen their trade dependence on the U.S.," according to reports in the *Wall Street Journal.*

Most threatening is the arrangement made with Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, a man with close ties to Fidel Castro and who claims his country is under "a new U.S. imperialist attack." China has agreed to invest over $400 million in Venezuela's oil and gas industry, and to buy 120,000 barrels of that country's fuel oil each month. Chávez had made it known that he plans to use the proceeds of his oil industry to fund sales of cheap oil to Castro, and he has not denied rumors that he plans to finance revolutionary groups in other Latin American

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countries. Moreover, he has announced that he is no longer bound by his exploration and development deals with American companies ConocoPhillips, Harvest Natural Resources, and ChevronTexaco, putting into question the reliability of supplies from Venezuela, which account for 15 percent of U.S. imports.

To top off all of this, CNOOC, China's third largest oil company, is preparing a series of acquisitions in Asia that will allow China to acquire the resources it needs to fuel its growth and extend its influence into countries in which its commercial presence has until now been insignificant. Most notable is a probable $13 billion takeover of Unocal, to be followed by the disposal of Unocal's American assets but the retention of its substantial Asian properties.

Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin has been developing what astute observer Roger Boyes calls "a new policy instrument" to reassert Russian power. That instrument is "the Russian gas and oil-exporting companies that already all but dominate Europe's energy supplies. . . . Gazprom has woven a web of energy dependencies from Turkey to Turkmenistan, from Berlin to Baku." According to the International Energy Agency, by 2020, natural gas will account for 62 percent of Europe's energy consumption, and Russia will supply two-thirds of that gas.

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This domination has more than commercial consequences. When German chancellor Gerhard Schröder told a television audience that Putin is a "dyed-in-the-wool democrat," the uninitiated chuckled, but insiders knew that the chancellor was simply indicating that he is not prepared to bite the hand that controls the valves of the pipelines that warm his country. Germany already gets 35 percent of its oil and 40 percent of its gas from Russia, figures that will steadily increase as Germany pursues its policy of winding down its nuclear power industry. The head of one of the think tanks affiliated with the German government preferred to remain anonymous when he told the press, "Given Moscow's history of strong-arming neighbors, we might want to think whether we really want to be in such a relationship."

Russia also plans to use its ample reserves of oil and gas to extend its influence in Asia. It has already agreed to allow Japan to finance an oil pipeline from eastern Siberia to the Pacific, from where it can be transported to Japan. The line, to be built by Russia's Transneft, will cover some 2,600 miles, cost $11.5 billion (some put the price tag at closer to $18 billion), and allow Russia to export to several Asian nations as well as Japan. This was no mere commercial transaction: Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi led the lobbying team that persuaded Putin to select the route that Japan favored.

Perhaps most important is Russia's use of oil to cement relations with China, an emerging alliance the consequences of which Charles Krauthammer has already warned are dangerous to American interests. A few weeks ago Russian energy minister Viktor Krishtenko visited Beijing to discuss areas of mutual interest with his Chinese counterparts. Just how China's desire to secure supplies of oil and natural gas, and Russia's desire for new markets and strategic advantage, will play out is uncertain. But there is every sign that Russian fuel is starting to warm historically chilly Sino-Russian relations. Putin has offered the China National Petroleum Corporation a piece of Yukos, the Russian oil giant that produces 1 percent of the world's crude oil, and that Putin effectively renationalized by jailing its principal shareholder (a Putin political opponent), and then slapping the company with a bankrupting demand for back taxes. Since American companies would have loved to have a crack at an interest in Yukos, Putin's decision to freeze them out is widely seen as a political decision to express unhappiness with American criticism of his recent power grabs, as well as an opportunity to cement relations with China, with which Russia's Gazprom already has signed agreements to cooperate in oil and gas markets.

Once again, we are witnessing deals that are more political than economic. Putin's *siloviki*, which includes his old KGB chums, is now firmly in control of Russia's oil industry, and plans to use the nation's resources to further diplomatic as well as economic goals, with the former taking precedence over the latter if the two goals should clash. As the *Economist* put it in a story titled "KGB Inc.," "It is a quirk of Russian history that the country's best hope of recovering the influence lost by Moscow with the fall of the Soviet Union is through the energy business." Former spies and "Kremlin henchmen," the story continued, quoting Paul Collison, an energy analyst at Brunswick UBS (a Russia-focused investment house), will make decisions in the interests of "only one shareholder—the state."

Putin knows that Chinese president Hu Jintao is more than a little annoyed that, to cater to Japan, his Russian counterpart selected the Pacific port of Nakhodka as a pipeline terminus, rather than Daqing. He wants "to make amends with China," Michelle Billig, a political risk ana-

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lyst with PIRA Energy Group, told the *International Herald Tribune*, which may explain Putin's offer to the Chinese of a branch connection with the pipeline joint-venture with Japan.

That same source quotes "a Western energy executive" who insisted on anonymity as saying, "My feeling is that this is all about leverage with the U.S." Russia doesn't need the financing or technology that China or Japan can provide—the United States could make both available if Russia were in search of the best source of these assets. For Putin, the heavy dependence of Europe on his nation's oil and gas resources gives him a nervous Germany as a defender of his democratic credentials, and joint ventures with China convert a onetime antagonist with whom Russia shares a 2,500-mile border into, if not an ally, at least a partner with shared interests.

So picture this web of influence that is being woven by countries eager to constrain American power. Canada and China become joint venturers, as do Venezuela and China. Canada is America's largest source of imported oil, and Venezuela sells us the light, sweet crude oil that our refineries are best equipped to handle. This means that a significant portion of the incremental production from these countries—and perhaps some of what is now headed here—goes to China, rather than to the United States, as energy planners here have been assuming. More important, no one believes that these deals are strictly economic, or would meet shareholder approval were such a force present in China. These are deals by state agencies, designed to extend China's influence to corners of the world from which it has until now been absent.

China has also solidified relations with Iran and other countries on America's list of international pariahs, trading arms for oil, and using its financial clout to establish close diplomatic ties in the region that contains the largest reserves of oil and gas in the world.

Meanwhile, Russia is using its reserves to dominate the European energy market, and make Germany, France, and other countries heavily dependent on Putin's good will. Not that he would cut off supplies at the slightest provocation. He doesn't have to. All the Russian "dyed-in-the-wool democrat" has to do is rely on German and French self-interest to tip those countries to his side in any dispute with the United States, just as China can rely on Latin American countries that benefit from its billions of investment to give that fact some weight in formulating their foreign policies.

Add the emerging relationship of China and Russia, and you have something to worry about. But not, it seems, if you are in the Bush administration. The president has nominated Samuel Bodman as his second-term secretary of energy. Bodman is no doubt an estimable executive, but his only prior experience in energy markets came when he gassed up his car. Besides, his main assignment, other than tending to the security of our nuclear facilities, is to push the president's energy bill through Congress. And that bill contains no realistic provision to reduce American dependence on oil imports. Bush will use legislation that cannot be filibustered in an attempt to win his fight to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to drilling, but even if he succeeds—which is doubtful—he will have added perhaps one million barrels per day to domestic supplies some two decades hence, by which time the Energy Information Administration estimates that oil consumption in America will be over 20 million barrels per day, of which over 15 million barrels will be imported. ANWR oil may some day come to more than a drop in the bucket, but it won't be enough to change the geopolitical consequences of American dependence on imports. Unless Bush's new coolness to the Saudi regime is accompanied by other policies to reduce the dependence that prompted FDR to strike a bargain with Ibn Saud in the first place, the president may wish he had limited the scope of his endorsement of democratic reform to countries that don't have any, or at least not much, oil under their soil. If we fail to reduce our reliance on oil, we will be obliged by economic self-interest to defend the Saudi royal family if—more likely, when—its control over some 25 percent of the world's oil reserves comes under assault.

Meanwhile, no thought is being given to the massive restructuring that is occurring in the international oil industry. Russia and China are using state-owned companies that are not bound to profit-maximize to achieve their long-term goal of weaving a web of relationships that will stand them in good stead in any diplomatic confrontation with the United States. Whether America can continue to rely on its private sector to provide us with comparable clout is no longer certain. After all, when companies that have to maximize profits compete with companies that seek to maximize national influence and power, the latter will engage in projects that the former simply cannot.

It may well be that state-directed ventures will prove so costly as to become unbearably massive consumers of their nations' resources—in the past, most countries (France being an exception) sooner or later decided that "national champions" are expensive luxuries, and the Soviet Union did collapse under the weight of its noneconomic enterprises. But it would be comforting to know that somewhere in our government a small group of knowledgeable people is worrying about something more than how to squeeze a few barrels of oil out of the frozen north. ♦

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Getting to Know the Sufis

There is a tolerant, pluralist tradition in Islam. We can't afford to ignore it.

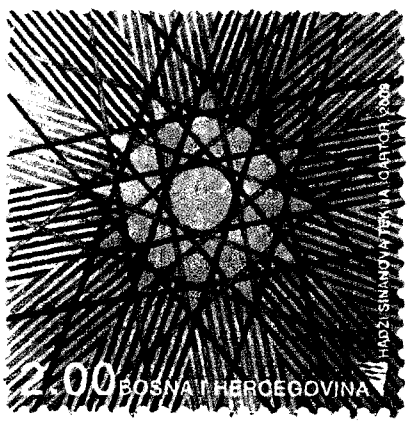
By Stephen Schwartz

Just four months ago, thousands of mourners thronged the Grand Mosque in Mecca for the funeral of a famous Sufi teacher. This was an extraordinary event, given the discrimination against all non-Wahhabi Muslims that is the state policy of Saudi Arabia. The dead man, 58-year-old Seyed Mohammad Alawi Al-Maliki, had been blacklisted from employment in religious education, banned from preaching in the Grand Mosque (a privilege once enjoyed by his father and grandfather), and even imprisoned by the Saudi regime and deprived of his passport. That so many Saudi subjects were willing to gather openly to mourn him—indeed, that his family succeeded in excluding Wahhabi clerics from the mosque during the memorial—says something important, not just about the state of dissent inside the Saudi kingdom, but also about pluralism in Islam.

It's hard to know which facet of Al-Maliki's identity his mourners were turning out to honor—if indeed these can be separated. He was, first, a Hejazi, a native of the western Arabian region that was an independent kingdom before the Saudi-Wahhabi conquest in the 1920s. Home to Mecca, Medina, and the commercial port of Jeddah, the Hejaz hosts an urban, cosmopolitan culture very different from that of the desert nomads. Al-Maliki's funeral was the first for a prominent Hejazi to be held in the Grand Mosque in decades.

He was also a leader of the Maliki school of Sunni Islam, a classical school of interpretation that the Wahhabis have forced underground in Saudi Arabia. Prior to the imposition of Wahhabi fascism, the Malikis, along with the other three main schools of Sunni Islam, had maintained a respected presence in the Grand Mosque for many centuries. Dialogue had characterized relations among these schools of Islamic thought.

But perhaps most significantly, Al-Maliki was an eminent teacher of Sufism. This spiritual and basically peaceful form of Islam is anathema to the Wahhabis, who have ferociously suppressed it. With disciples in South Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia, and even the United States, Al-Maliki was an outstanding representative of moderate, traditional Islam.



Bosnian stamp with Sufi meditation symbol

Some Saudi dissidents saw a muffled demand for political reform in the public outpouring of admiration for Al-Maliki; he had attended a Saudi-government-sponsored national dialogue on political change in late 2003. Others viewed it as an affirmation of secret affiliation with the Maliki school. But many Saudis treated the massive funeral principally as a manifestation of sympathy for Sufism. Clandestine Sufi meetings have become commonplace in Jeddah, the hive of liberal reformism in the kingdom, and increasing numbers of young people have taken to Sufism as an expression of anti-Wahhabi defiance.

Islamic pluralism is not a new idea dreamed up in the West and offered as a helpful cure for Muslim rage. It is a longstanding reality. The Muslim world comprises a spectrum of religious interpretations. If, at one end of the continuum, we find the fanatical creed of Wahhabism, cruel and arbitrary, more an Arab-supremacist state ideology than a religious sect, at the other end we find the enlightened traditions of Sufism. These stress not only intra-

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Islamic dialogue, separation of spiritual from clerical authority, and teaching in the vernacular, but also respect for all believers, whether Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, or other. Sufis emphasize, above all, their commitment to mutual civility, interaction, and cooperation among believers, regardless of sect.

Indeed, the further the distance from Wahhabism, the greater the element of pluralism present in Islam. Where the Wahhabis insist that there is only one, monolithic, authentic Islam (theirs), the Sufis express their faith through hundreds of different orders and communities around the globe, none pretending to an exclusive hold on truth. Sufis may be either Sunni or Shia; some would claim to have transcended the difference. Throughout its 1,200-year history, Sufism has rested on a spiritual foundation of love for the creator and creation, which implies the cultivation of mercy and compassion toward all human beings. These principles are expressed in esoteric teachings imparted through formal instruction.

Sufis follow teachers—known as *sheikhs*, *babas*, *pirs*, and *mullahs* (the latter, meaning "protector," had no pejorative meaning before the Iranian revolution)—but they resist the notion that religious authority should be based on titles and offices. Rather, Sufi teachers gain acceptance and support by their insights and capacity for transmission of enlightenment to their students.

Stephen Schwartz

The Yesevi Sufis' lodge, or tekke, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 2004

The history of Sufism is filled with examples of interfaith fusion, in contrast with the rigid separatism of the Islamic fundamentalists. Balkan and Turkish Sufis share holy sites with Christians. Central Asian Sufis preserve traditions inherited from shamans and Buddhists. Sufis in French-speaking West Africa adapt local customs, and those in Eastern Turkestan borrow from Chinese traditions such as Confucianism and Taoism, as well as martial arts. In the Balkans, Turkey, and Central Asia, Sufis have accepted secularism as a bulwark against religious intolerance and the monopolization of religious opinion by clerics.

The mode of life followed by Sufis, who are also known as dervishes, is as varied as their geographical distribution. Some retire into seclusion, living on the grounds of *tekkes* or lodges where Sufis typically meet weekly for meditation, chanting, and other rituals, known as *zikr* or "remembrance of God." Others give up their worldly possessions and wander as pilgrims. Yet most Sufis in the Muslim world maintain ordinary working lives, and some have become rich; it was said that when Sheikh al-Maliki's funeral was held in Mecca, private jets choked Saudi airports for days. Sufism has also exercised an influence, if a limited one, on intellectuals and spiritual seekers in the West.

Among Western experts at the State Department and in academic Middle East Studies programs, Sufism is often dismissed as "folk Islam," echoing the denigration voiced by the Islamic clerical establishment. This is paradoxical, for although there are regions where Sufism is the prevalent form of Islam and its influence is seen in a lack of strict observance, Sufis are more often than not sophisticated in their breadth of reading and worldview. In some countries, such as Egypt, Sufis are sometimes derided as credulous bumpkins, but in others, like India, they tend to be viewed as an elite.

Western experts' disdain for Sufism, however, is worse than paradoxical. It indicates a remarkable blindness to a cultural resource profoundly relevant to the possible growth of pluralism and tolerance—and therefore the emergence of democratic cultures—in the Islamic world.

Just what is the relationship between Sufism and the prospect for political progress in the Muslim nations? At the risk of grossly oversimplifying complex phenomena, it may be useful to distinguish three different patterns.

(1) We have already seen how, under conditions of oppression, Sufism in Saudi Arabia has become something of a channel for cultural resistance and political opposition. The Saudi case is not unique. In several places, Sufism has nourished resistance to oppressive regimes. The Sufi always prefers peace to war, and nonviolence to violence. But Sufis are also fighters against injustice. As the dean of Western historians of Islam, Bernard Lewis, puts it, Sufism is "peaceful but not pacifist." Some Sufis have been famous for their involvement in *jihad*, although the 19th-century Sufi and leader of the early Algerian opposition to French conquest Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi famously commented, "The Sufi does not go gladly to *jihad*." Al-Jazairi himself preached, and showed by example, that protection of non-Muslim civilians (in this instance, French colonists in Algeria) was required of Muslims fighting a Christian invader.

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Similarly, in Kosovo, Sufis played a major role, over decades, in resisting, sometimes by means of guerrilla war, the abuses inflicted on Albanians by the Turkish authorities, and later by Slavic imperialists. Iraqi Kurdistan is another Sufi center; its spiritual leaders were prominent in fighting Saddam Hussein, and now actively promote the Iraqi alliance with the United States. Sufis were the traditional inspirers of the struggle against Russian aggression in Chechnya and other Caucasian Muslim areas, until, at the end of the 1990s, the conflict in Chechnya was usurped by Wahhabi Arabs who bent it in a terrorist direction.

(2) A second model can be discerned where Sufism is the dominant form of Islam, in lands stretching from French-speaking West Africa and Morocco to the Balkans, Turkey, and Central Asia, and from India to Indonesia. Here, Sufism has deeply influenced local cultures, facilitating secularist attitudes as well as coexistence with non-Muslims. It is no accident that Morocco, Turkey, and Indonesia, all of which feature Sufi-dominated Islam, are the countries often deemed to have the best potential for the development of Muslim democracies. In India, of course, Muslims now numbering 130 million have lived as a minority in a functioning democracy for half a century.

Against many obstacles, the kings of Morocco—home to some of the most respected and subtle Sufi thinkers—have sought to maintain good relations with the country's centuries-old Jewish community as well as with Israel. Turkey, whose cultural life is replete with Sufi influence (even though the Sufi orders themselves were outlawed by the secularizing regime in the 1920s and remain underground to this day), also has an excellent record with both Turkish Jews and the state of Israel. The constitution of Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation, with a population of 240 million, promises religious freedom for all beliefs, though the religion of the majority is taught in public schools; a Sufi mass organization with 30 million members, the Muhammadiyah, has been outspoken in its opposition to Islamist extremism. What varies considerably in these countries is the institutional strength of Sufism. Thus, in Central Asia, where famous Sufis are national cultural heroes, the long night of Soviet communism left the Sufis structurally weak, and they are presently rebuilding their orders.

In places where Sufism is dominant, spiritual traditions may play a positive role in fostering civic values conducive to democracy. The Bektashi Sufis of the Albanian lands, counting 3 million members from Kosovo to northern Greece, for example, declare boldly that they are "the most progressive Muslims in the world!"—as I was vociferously reminded in 2003 by Baba Tahir Emini, their leader in Western Macedonia. They are especially known for their dedication to women's rights and popular education, and are the only Sufi order to permit drinking alcohol.

(3) A third model can be identified in places where Sufism is influential among the mass of Muslims, but the dervishes have kept their heads down so as to avoid conflict with the ruling dictators. In these countries—among them Syria, Iran, and Sudan—Sufism remains quietist. Nobody can say what role the Sufis might eventually play here, if or when each regime begins or accelerates a transition away from Baathism (in the first case), clerical rule (in the second), or violent Islamism (in the third). But the Sufis' private dedication to religious and intellectual pluralism can only reinforce whatever positive developments may emerge.

Given this varied picture, how should Sufism enter into American strategies for dealing with the Islamic world?

Most obviously, Americans should learn more about Sufism, engaging with its leaders and followers, and getting to know its main trends. This isn't hard, as the meeting houses of the Sufi orders are easy to find in every Muslim country except Saudi Arabia. American diplomats in Muslim cities from Pristina in Kosovo to Kashgar in western China, and from Fez in Morocco to the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, should include the local Sufis on their lists for frequent visits. American students and business people, aid workers and tourists, should embrace opportunities to get acquainted with Sufis. Most important, anyone in or out of government who is in a position to influence the discussion and shaping of U.S. policy toward the Middle East can benefit from an appreciation of this indigenous tradition of Islamic tolerance.

It should go without saying that attempts at direct cooptation or subsidy of a "Sufi alternative" to radical Islam should be avoided. To remain true to itself, Sufism must be independent. Sufis do not need money, but comprehension and respect as a major component of the global Islamic community.

At the same time, on human rights grounds, the United States must speak up for Sufis against those who repress them, often violently, especially in Saudi Arabia. To repeat, in the Wahhabi-dominated kingdom, an independent, spiritual Sufi oppositional culture is emerging, with special attraction for young people. Against the backdrop of Saudi fanaticism, including the open support for radical Islam coming from some of Riyadh's richest and most powerful personalities, Sufism exemplifies the Islamic pluralism that, if restored to Saudi Arabia, could shut off the money flow to al Qaeda and its allies worldwide. These are opportunities in the war against terror that the United States would be foolish to miss. ♦

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Gregory Peck and Jennifer Jones in *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1956). Everett Collection

The Best Years of Our Lives

When did critics start yearning to return to the life of the 1950s? By Brian Murray

In the pageant of the decades, the 1950s always lose. The 1920s still suggest swagger and style: jazz, flappers, bathtub gin. The 1930s, though grim, are also linked in the popular imagination with nerve and verve: Lindbergh's flight and Lubitsch's films. The 1940s are heroic and the '60s cool. Even the 1970s, the polyester years, are now widely celebrated for their tacky charm.

But the 1950s have an image problem. Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe are now the decade's most famous faces: a pair of troubled celebrities who abused drugs and died young. Visual shorthand for the decade is always the same: black-and-white clips of row after row of cloned houses in Levittown, or gaudy tailfins on cars, or H-bomb clouds mushrooming over Bikini Island.

Modern films about the 1950s are usually about lynchings or gangland slayings—or they parody the too-perfect family sitcoms that live forever in syndication. *Pleasantville* (1998) is typical, underscoring the notion that Americans living in the 1950s were held hostage in a world of media brainwashing and sexual repression. Fortunately, the 1960s liberated these poor souls and their descendants, who might otherwise still be wandering around like zombies, the men dressed like Fred Mertz, the women in aprons and pearls with minds fixed on refrigerators.

Beyond the Gray Flannel Suit
Books from the 1950s that Made American Culture
by David Castronovo
Continuum, 203 pp., $22.95

Occasionally, interest in the 1950s flares up, and someone tries to set the record straight. David Halberstam's *The Fifties* (1993), for example, recalled a time of "general good will and expanding affluence." Millions of Americans remembered the Depression and the war—and then found themselves living in a time of high employment, low inflation, and the kind of prosperity they hadn't seen in nearly thirty years. No wonder the yearning for normalcy, permanence, and large household appliances was so keen.

Change was in the air, on a thousand fronts. Network television, air conditioning, computers, jet travel, a national highway system, chain hotels, franchised fast food: The country shrank as business boomed. Cultural and intellectual life was no less dynamic, as Eero Saarinen designed buildings, Elia Kazan made movies, Arthur Miller wrote plays, and John Coltrane blew his horn. Political journals thrived in a Cold War climate where much was at stake: *Commentary*, *Politics*, *Partisan Review*, *National Review*. From our current perspective, American culture of the fifties looks both daring and substantial, assured and adult. No wonder it excited the world.

In his new critical study *Beyond the Gray Flannel Suit*, David Castronovo surveys and analyzes most of the best and most influential literature of the postwar years, from 1946 to 1961. Malcolm Cowley, Castronovo notes, had described the 1920s as America's "second flowering," comparable to the gen-

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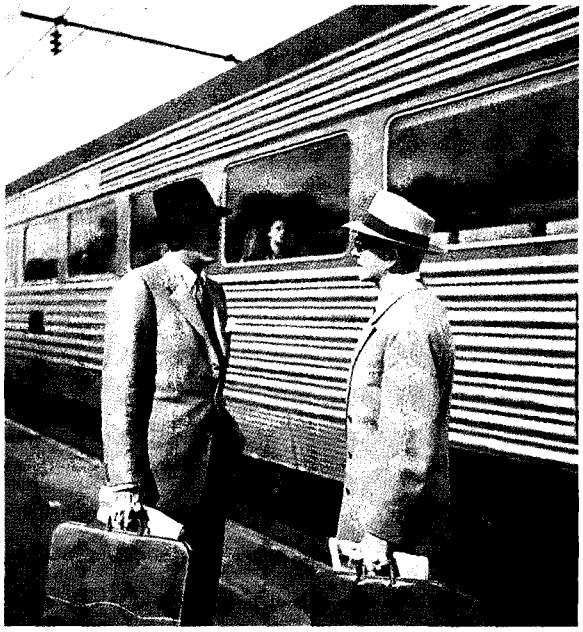

Everett Collection.

eration of Emerson and Thoreau. For Castronovo, the literary 1950s were a "third flowering of American talent." In fact, American literature of the 1950s "now asserts special claims to greatness," drawing energy from a decade that was far from being "smug and absorbed with its own splendors."

This will surprise readers who associate the 1950s with those bestsellers that one still finds, yellowing and damp, on the shelves of rented beach houses and in barrels at church rummage sales. Many of these are what Castronovo calls "bread-and-butter naturalistic" works like John O'Hara's *From the Terrace* (1958), James Gould Cozzens's *By Love Possessed* (1957), and Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955). Wilson's novel, along with nonfiction books like David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), C. Wright Mills's *The Power Elite* (1956), and William Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956), struck themes that would replay more loudly in the decade to come. There's a clear line of descent from Wilson's book to all those 1960s films and novels (think of 1968's *Sweet November*) in which unhappy businessmen end up chucking their suits for bellbottoms and beads.

Wilson's protagonist, Tom Rath, saw extensive action as a paratrooper in the Second World War. When he returns, Rath dons his new, grey flannel uniform and—as Whyte would put it—"takes the vows of organization life" to become a public-relations man in a large Manhattan corporation. Rath is well paid but unhappy, fearing that his drive for wealth and respectability has endangered his marriage and compromised his soul. Near the novel's close, Rath's wife tells him that "all you know how to do is work day and night and worry."

Tom eventually quits his job, and together the Raths leave the rat race for what the novel promises will be a more authentic life in Vermont. Wilson's novel remains largely readable, and Rath's memories of combat, rendered plainly and without melodrama, still make for powerful reading. But *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* ends—as Castronovo puts it—in a "bundle of clichés." It has dated, as bestsellers almost always do.

Castronovo is an astute, blunt, and erudite critic; he is enthusiastic, not jargonistic, and manages to make many of the classic books of the 1950s—the ones most English majors know—seem relevant and fresh. He is interested, for example, in "accessible modernist classics" like Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (1952) and Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953). These books offered "thick symbolic and poetic texture" but "were nevertheless fun to read." They "transcended" the naturalistic mode and its "raw clunky narratives" but preserved its "vigor and directness" nonetheless. Ellison and Bellow were not, like so many 1950s novelists, literary descendants of Theodore Dreiser; they "experimented with language without losing contact with a readership hungry for vivid stories."

Castronovo is generous, but largely balanced in his praise of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) for creating, each in its own way, "a unique idiom for registering personal experience." He hails the originality of such noir novels as Cornell Woolrich's *I Married a Dead Man* (1948), Jim Thompson's *The Killer Inside Me* (1953), and David Goodis's *Shoot the Piano Player* (1956); these stories of "ruination, blindness and anguish" make readers "think about warped human nature and scare us into some insights about ourselves."

Beyond the Grey Flannel Suit also praises J.F. Powers, whose *Morte d'Urban* (1962), about a Catholic priest, reveals a novelist with brilliant narrative and satiric skills. Powers's territory, Castronovo writes, "is, to a large extent, Mencken's booboisie," and yet his gallery of "rogues, clucks, and do-nothings, and know-nothings" is displayed "with a subtlety and dramatic sense that makes scourges of provincialism such as Sinclair Lewis and H.L. Mencken seem heavy-handed."

Castronovo also reminds us that the 1950s were a golden age for the short story, as the works of Flannery O'Connor, John Cheever, and Philip Roth reveal. These writers have not lost their relevance; certainly Cheever, with his careful prose and his mix of the fantastic and the real seems as fresh as ever, the one '50s writer who, in his short fiction, hasn't dated at all.

What else endures? In a chapter on critical writing, Castronovo points to the accomplishments of both Dwight Macdonald and Lionel Trilling, two prolific and influential essayists who began to fade in the 1970s as criticism became more academic and recondite, and competing strains of literary theory, imported from the continent, began to hold sway. Trilling and the more acerbic and combative Macdonald were among the best of the 1950s critics who wrote "for a general literate audience," as Castronovo observes, focusing on "freestanding essays about our cultural life." They "dealt with issues that have never faded," including "popular vs. high art, politics and the demands of literature, the media, quality (or lack of it) in popular fiction, the dumbing down of American life."

Castronovo sent me back to Trilling, and I found essays like "Kipling," "Little Dorrit," and "Flaubert's Last Testament" as engaging as ever. Who

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could not be impressed by the depth of Trilling's learning, the seriousness of his purpose, or the lovely roll of his prose? Trilling brings into the twentieth century the music of the great Victorian stylists, like Matthew Arnold, one of Trilling's intellectual heroes. Of course, Sigmund Freud was another of Trilling's heroes, as such essays as "Freud and Literature" and "Art and Neurosis" make plain. Freud is also there, less explicitly, in Trilling's trenchant analysis of the sensibility of Alfred Kinsey, which appeared after the 1948 publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male.*

Kinsey, Trilling admits, did his homework, interviewing scores of men about their sexual practices and histories. But Kinsey, Trilling argues, did not take sex seriously enough. Instead, he signaled a baleful trend, believing that if you collect enough data and tally up all the numbers you can arrive at an objective presentation of the truth—even in regard to a subject as complex and encompassing as human sexuality. Kinsey's report emphasizes "the anatomical and physiological nature of sexuality," and relies "on animal behavior as a norm." It is "by no means unaware of the psychic conditions of sexuality, yet it uses the concept almost always under the influence of its quantitative assumption."

Thus, the report is "partisan with sex, it wants people to have a good sexuality. But by good it means nothing else but frequent." Kinsey's study, Trilling observes, "never suggests that a sexual experience is anything but the discharge of specifically sexual tension and therefore seems to conclude that frequency is always the sign of a robust sexuality." But obviously, "adult intercourse may be the expression of anxiety," among other things, and "its frequency may not be so much robust as compulsive."

Kinsey enjoyed wide publicity in the 1950s, and his findings, summarized in the popular media, have long since taken on the aura of irrefutability. ("Kinsey was the prophet," Hugh Hefner liked to proclaim, "and I was the pamphleteer.") In fact, it is the steady spread, the ubiquity, and the power of mass media in the last fifty years—and, more particularly, the last thirty years—that, for better or worse, has most transformed our culture, making the world of the 1950s appear increasingly remote. Castronovo knows this, observing finally that while it's true the 1950s "had its smugness and conformity and provinciality," the media "had not as yet set a program for the nation. There was still room for writers to attempt that—and writers' opinions, rather than those of focus groups, counted for something."

In a concluding chapter, Castronovo quotes the late Marion Magid, a *Commentary* editor who provides another glimpse into the uniqueness of the 1950s by noting that "it was the last time it was possible to have a 'personal' life. There was a sense of discovery then, but later everything became so codified. Now relationships are mapped, there are pre-established attitudes. There's a sense that everything's been ransacked—every secret, ethnic and sexual. There's no more privacy. You meet and everyone exchanges credentials. We had more room to live the inner life."

In *Beyond the Gray Flannel Suit*, David Castronovo effectively demonstrates that to reenter the life of the 1950s, that lost and transformative decade, we must turn again to the books that prove that "there was undoubtedly something good about a time when so many works of superb quality could be written and published and recognized." ♦

Ruling the Waves

Why Britons never, never, never were slaves.

BY HENRIK BERING

In August 2003, the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* ran an obituary on the famous British explorer Sir Wilfred Thesiger. As a young man in the 1930s, Thesiger had set out to Abyssinia to explore the Awash river and the desolate Aussa sultanate, which included land inhabited by the fierce Danakil nomads who, according to the paper, were "chiefly noted for a disturbing tendency to kill men and carry off their testicles as trophies." But, the obituary noted, this prospect did not unduly alarm the young Thesiger, who had after all survived the rigors of Eton with its floggings and other, more elaborate rituals of humiliation.

The British Seaborne Empire
by Jeremy Black
Yale University Press, 432 pp., $40

Sir Wilfred was a throwback to another time and another world, that of the British empire. He could have stepped out of the pages of British historian Jeremy Black's new sprawling brick of a book on the origins of the empire, its rise and decline, and how it affected all aspects of society, exploration, science, and the arts.

While British intellectuals tend to be masochistic about their former empire, blaming it for a host of modern woes, books on the subject enjoy an increased interest in the United States these days, as America has inherited Britain's traditional role as the world's guarantor of stability.

Britain is an island nation and its empire was based on its maritime strength, hence the title—*The British Seaborne Empire*—which echoes the titles of classic works on the Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish empires. When reading the book, it is a good idea to have a globe next to you, preferably one of those old Victorian ones

Henrik Bering is a journalist and critic.

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The Battle of Trafalgar. CORBIS.

where everything British is marked in red.

In the Middle Ages, according to Black, the English kings had been dead set on conquering France, but the loss of Normandy and Gascony to Charles VII and the defeat at Castillon in 1453 put an end to that. So they started looking across the oceans for new possibilities. Compared with Spain or Portugal, England was not as well situated, nor as experienced in deep sea navigation, but with its large population of fishermen, there was a strong maritime base on which to build.

It took a while getting shipshape, so to speak. In 1545, Henry VIII had the unpleasant experience of watching, from the shore, his great top-heavy *Mary Rose*—as much a piece of gorgeous woodcarving as a functioning warship—capsize right before his eyes. She had just left Portsmouth harbor and was about to engage the French, when a sudden gust of wind caused her gunports to be flooded. Improvements in ship design, however, gradually improved the odds of survival.

England needed its navy partly to defend against invasion and partly to protect its trade from the Spaniards and the Portuguese, while attacking theirs. During the reign of Elizabeth I, the navy and a strong "Protestant" wind defeated the Spanish Armada, and Francis Drake became the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe. For his services, he was knighted by the queen in 1581 on board his ship, *The Golden Hind*. In retrospect, this was a defining moment in the history of the British empire, recognizing Sir Francis, with his talent for piracy, as the embodiment of English courage and resourcefulness.

But naval advancement was not up to the swashbucklers alone. At the time of the Restoration, Samuel Pepys was made Clerk of the King's Ships and rose to become secretary to the admiralty. When not frolicking with his mistresses or attending the theater, the famed diarist was striving mightily to improve the efficiency of the Royal Navy, laying the foundation for it to play an important role on the world stage.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Black writes, an ideology of empire began to develop in Britain. Protestantism, economic growth, and increasing maritime power all contributed to the sense that the British were a chosen people. The writers of the day were keen students of history, and they believed that Britain's emphasis on liberty set it apart from other empires past and present, and guaranteed that it would not perish in corruption and tyranny.

This pride manifested itself in a variety of ways, as when Samuel Johnson extolled the past glories of the navy in his early poem "London," and when he and his friend Richard Savage, too poor to pay for lodgings but "brimful of patriotism," would walk around St. James Square at night and resolve that they would "stand by the country." Or when the former sea captain Thomas Coram established The Foundling Hospital in London. Foundlings made such capital sailors, the good captain thought.

There were setbacks, of course. The loss of the American colonies, triggered by an attempt to extract taxes to pay for the Seven Years' War, produced momentary doubts about Britain's strength as a world power and forebodings of imminent disaster. But catastrophe did not happen. Indeed, before long, Britain established trade relations with the newly independent states.

Victory over France in the Napoleonic wars helped restore Britain's confidence. Once again, the

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British saw themselves as the agent of Providence, bringing civilization to a benighted world. The British empire represented the high point and the conclusion of the historical process.

Evangelicalism, the missionary movement, and the reform-minded middle class also played an important part in the development of Britain's sense of moral achievement. Under their combined enlightening influence, slavery came to be understood as an abomination: Participation in the slave trade was made a felony and slavery was abolished in the colonies in 1833. Yet the British still saw themselves as racially superior.

During the nineteenth century, Britain's imperial focus shifted from the North Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. Expansion took place mainly on land, though, as Black notes, such expansion of course relied on naval hegemony: Britain was not involved in any major naval struggle until 1914. Geographically, the spotlight was on India, and towards the end of the century, on Africa.

India was the jewel in the crown—and a great gig for many young men. If you were number two in the inheritance lineup, unfit for book studies due to dyslexia, or merely burdened by gambling debts, India was the place for you. It certainly represented a challenge. Two hundred thousand administrators and seventy thousand soldiers controlled an area eighteen times the size of Britain. For an officer, life consisted of endless dinners in the officers' mess, gin and tonics, polo, and tiger hunting, interrupted only by an occasional rebellion.

With boundless curiosity towards their surroundings, the Victorians exhibited self-assurance, fortitude, and an unwavering commitment to empire. They practiced their own brand of muscular Christianity, as opposed to what they saw as the irrational mysticism of the native populations. "I do not worship crocodiles / Or bow my knee to clay," as Kipling memorably wrote. General Gordon's death in Khartoum by the Mahdi's forces provided the inspirational example of the supreme sacrifice.

In the year 1900, the empire, at its zenith, covered one-fifth of the globe's land surface. Empty bottles of Lea & Perrins Worcestershire sauce that made rancid meat edible have since been found everywhere the British went. But already there were signs of unease.

Black quotes the British director of military operations: "We are governing with a mere handful of white officials vast populations alien to us in race, language and religion. The authority of these officials rests on no other basis than a belief in the invincibility of the British government and confidence in its promises."

The First World War placed a heavy burden on Britain's finances, making it increasingly hard to sustain the empire. Britain, which had been the world's leading creditor, was now its leading debtor, and the United States had taken over its exports to Canada and Latin America.

But France, Germany, and Russia had suffered even worse in the war, and during the interwar years the empire still looked relatively impressive. But only on the surface. In India, Gandhi through his nonviolent tactics, was already undermining the British position.

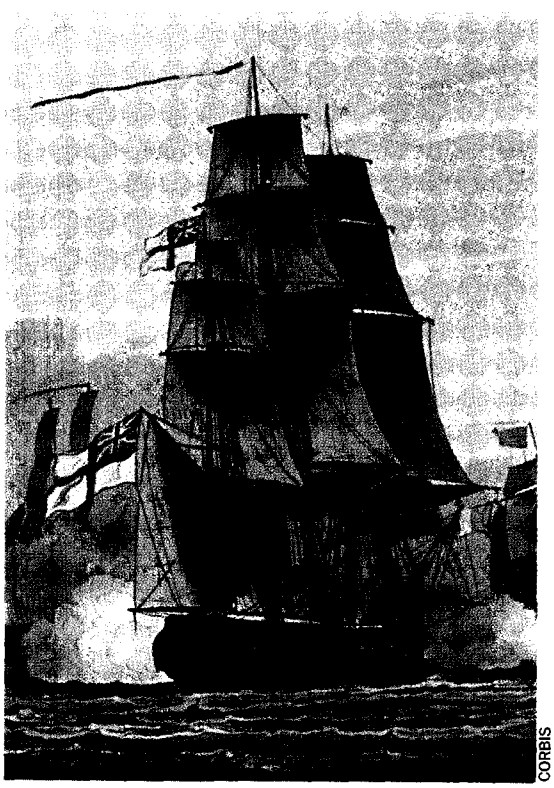
In World War II, the British suffered a string of defeats to the Japanese, culminating in the surrender of Singapore in 1942, where it became painfully clear that the British were not infallible gods. After the war, Britain, financially and emotionally spent, withdrew from India.

And in 1956, after the Anglo-French invasion of Suez had ended in ignominious withdrawal because of American opposition, the British lost all appetite for acting on their own. From then on, the Americans were running the show.

After decades of cultural relativism, historians are not exactly lining up to praise the British empire, but it did have some positive aspects, chiefly the emphasis on the rule of law in British constitutionalism. On this point, Black quotes fellow historian Niall Ferguson: "No organization in history has done more to promote the free movement of goods, capital and labour, and to impose western norms of law, order and governance around the world."

Like the Brits, the Americans believe in the benefits of trade, and they also have a sense of destiny, as the spreaders of freedom and democracy. The advantage of the American ideology is that it is based on universal human rights.

Still, there is the temptation for the United States to turn its back to the world, which is what happened after World War I and what almost happened again after Vietnam. It was never really an option, and it is certainly not an option after 9/11. The United States has to look out for the world, a task that demands self-confidence, stamina, and stoicism. And here one can learn a thing or two from the British in their heyday. ♦



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Storm Warnings

Architectural change is coming—and it ain't gonna be pretty. BY ARTHUR COTTON MOORE

Venice

After a few days walking around Venice, my mind full of reflections and my boots full of water, I remembered that change is not always benign—as Kafka told us in *The Metamorphosis*, when his character Gregor wakes up to find himself transformed into an insect.

I was there for "Metamorph," the Ninth Architecture Biennale, perhaps the grandest and most widely touted such event, a multilayered world's fair mounted to tell us where architecture is heading and what changes we will find in tomorrow's world. There does not exist a better venue to see a collective vision of the future of architecture than the magical antique city of Venice—an aqueous marvel of enchanting entropy and dilapidation, itself a metaphor of physical uncertainty and change, especially during its flood season. But Kafkaesque remains the word for what the architects and architectural theorists gathered in Vienna think is coming for us all.

This new Biennale was divided between the Giardini (a major park a few blocks from San Marco Square) and the Arsenale (a very long rectangular building in which rope was made for the Venetian Navy). The Giardini exhibition consisted of pavilions where each participating country tried to demonstrate why it is the supremely best place in the world—mostly through quite arty installations that would be right at home in Manhattan's Chelsea.

The exhibitions often overreached and dove into obscurantism, and the United States' pavilion was, alas, one of the worst offenders. Occasionally, there was wit, as in the Danish pavilion, which installed a large conveyor belt upon which an endless series of look-alike Monopoly buildings marched across the land like Lemmings from Levittown. For gravity and balance, there was the unassuming proposal to cut and paste Greenland's vast fresh water icebergs to thirsty, parched Africa.

The most unabashed critical self-awareness was displayed in the Japanese pavilion, which was completely taken over by a presentation of "otaku," described thusly: "The term *otaku* was coined to signify a new personality that had emerged as a reaction to the loss of future. Otakus were, by nature, formerly ambitious boys who are particularly affected by the loss of faith in science and technology." The otakus took the sweetness of Disney and turned it into super-saccharine big-eyed cartoon characters who express erotic and violent behavior. Japan culture-watchers have seen the movement creeping forward since the 1980s, but its insertion into an international exhibition of architecture was ominous and prescient.

Meanwhile, the Arsenale's offerings were far more juicy. The building was organized by a seemingly endless series of votive-like, vaguely gondola-shaped white armatures upon which projects were bracketed up or suspended—a subtle and facile design element itself.

In fact, nearly all the Biennale was aesthetically impressive, with projects keenly presented, lit, and organized: precisely sharp models, gorgeous graphics, and astonishing renderings that could only be done on today's computers—all composed and choreographed to take your breath away. To think that Michelangelo did what he did by hand is downright humbling.

Still, architecture is an art grounded in practical reality, and much of the Biennale was concerned with transforming architects into "artists," free to shed boring old imperatives like buildability, utility, site, and clients with their pesky budgets. Curiously, that freedom in an otherwise unfree art produced presentations that hid their function or purpose; indeed, a too-frequent question was "What is it?" sending the visitor to the side walls where abundant text awaited, where the word "iconic" was used so often it could only be perceived as punctuation, interspersed between typical architectural writing's $10 words like "anamorphic," "parametric propensity," "ephemerality," "lapidary," "nanotechnology," and "mobius strips"—maddening writing where the prominent new contorted forms were unexplained while the text prattled on about community spaces, which were invisible.

Yes, if architects were good writers they wouldn't need to draw anything, but what they have drawn (or, rather, what they have mouse-clicked) revealed a lot more than their wordatecture. Hosted as red-carpet "artists," the architects were impelled further into the loud silence of noncommunication.

In 1975, postmodernism reigned supreme. But now postmodernism is so dated that not a breath of this history sullied this year's purity. A more self-confident avant-garde would have acknowledged its origins, avoiding the taint of insecurity running throughout all the rampantly delicious creative experimentation. Fashion cycles these days seem to require dancing on the grave of the immediate predecessor, and today's buzz eventually becomes tomorrow's noise. This is well known by preservationists, but preservation, or the use of anything existing, was so poorly represented that the only example I could find was a design that showed a knifelike glass shard stabbed through an old building, metaphorically killing it.

Arthur Cotton Moore is an award-winning architect, painter, and furniture designer, and the author of The Power of Preservation.

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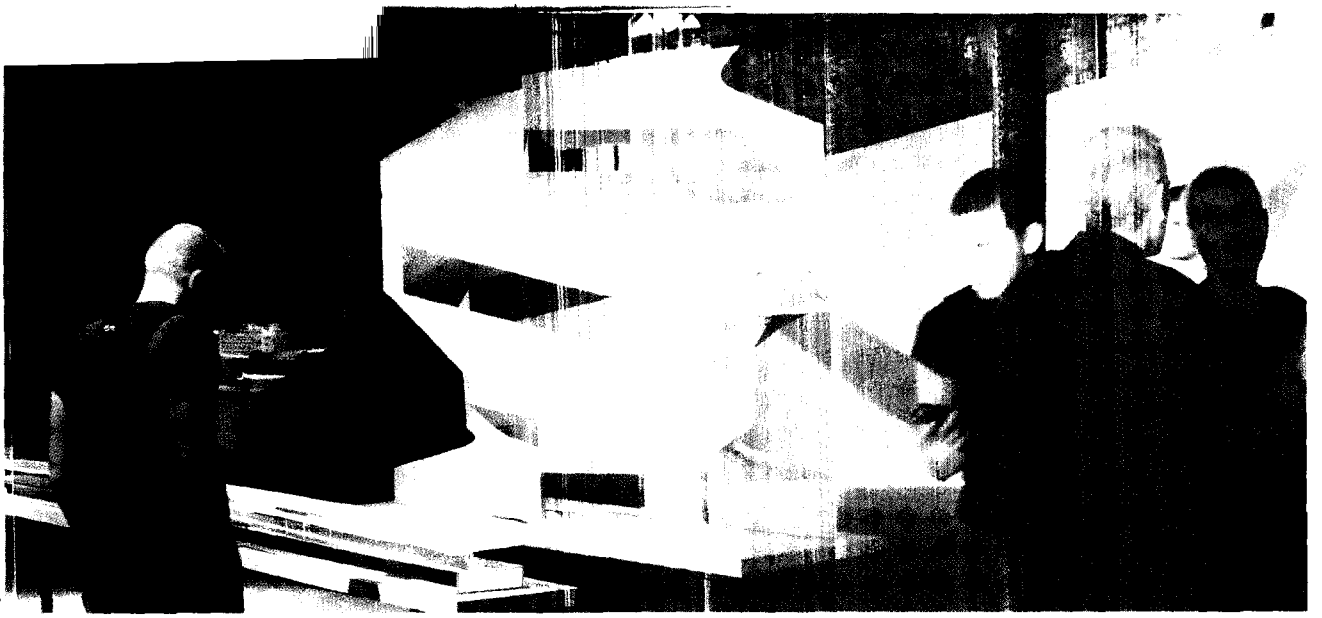

Agence France Presse

A model for a museum on display in Venice's Arsenale during the Biennale International Architecture Exhibition

So what does this latest Biennale say our buildings will be like in the next fifteen-minute moment? Formalistically, the traditional square corner of architecture—the 90-degree angle that built Western architecture—is on vacation. Acute angles are now standard, applied to some Brobdingnagian projects that, even though they are furiously zipped and zapped like lightning bolts, seem in the end as totalitarian as some of the worst public housing projects of the 1960s. Curves (promoted inaccurately with bogus references to Renaissance master Borromini and early modern favorite Erich Mendelsohn) were usually just the rounding of the corners of essentially rectangular compositions; large curves were generally rendered in staccato straight sections, their inherent sensual fluidity suppressed.

The muse of the exhibition was Friedrich Kiesler, who in his lifetime built almost nothing except a temporary gallery in New York, in which (like those of his famous "Endless House" proposal) the walls, floors, and ceilings curve into each other in a continuous flowing form. As it happens, the result was quite beautiful. Unfortunately, various Biennale projects misappropriated Kiesler's direction into biological/organic/protoplasmic imagery designs—which too correctly simulated gastrointestinal tracts, imminently ready to ooze.

The core prognostication proffered for tomorrow seemed to be denial, preceded by rejection. It sometimes manifested itself into the form called a "blob": basically, a shoe-box shape, curved by removing its air so it sags like a slab of fat on a table. Some of the proposed impositions on the defenseless landscape were observably without windows or doors.

Back on the gorgeous graphics wall text, the absence of a single definable entrance to the proposed buildings was touted as a project which could receive people from all directions, the fact that we live in an age of security and controllable entrances notwithstanding. Clear entrances were absent from virtually every project. The question "What is it?" was always followed by "How do I get in?"

The strongest and most interesting trend derives from the "Blur Building," a *tour de force* temporary structure by Diller and Scofidio of New York for a fair in Europe. Its perimeter projected a large number of nozzles to spray mist, making the building look like a cloud having no defining edges. In these exposition projects, various devices like netting and screening were used to blur shapes and perimeters, often supporting vines and plants draped over the hard forms, and those blobs sagged into no readable shape.

The most popular strategy seemed to be taking the building and blending it into the landscape, so one could not determine where the hill left off and the building began. Using naturalistic shapes, many projects were underground—or at least looked like they were trying to go underground. The pervasive trend in all this was not a return to the hut, but to the cave, and caves, as a general rule, don't have many windows. Like entrances, windows, except for great gashes of glass for skylights, were a casualty of the exhibition.

The result of this consistent attempt to hide the buildings—to cloud them, to have them recede into the landscape, with no recognizable form which could be appreciated or criticized—suggests a profound unease and pessimism, a retreat into a pseudo ecoworld refuge. Even the biological forms tried to merge with nature in a deliberate will to camouflage and hide.

The choice to blur and obscure, to burrow into the ground, to submerge biologically, to dispense with readable identity, utilitarian penetrations, and—most significant for a creative profession—to deny the creator's own creation and possible applause (but avoid criticism), is denial of the self and a positive future, recalling the Japanese phenomenon of the otakus.

Venice is a particularly interesting place to make such a surreal claim about future architecture—a city whose buildings were very much designed to be seen, applauded, and easily read as what they are. Hope for the future at the world's most prestigious architecture show might embrace a perspective that involves the recent past, the long past, and the true reality of the present. ♦

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President Bush plans to nominate Michael Jackson, a former deputy transportation secretary, to the No. 2 position at the Homeland Security Department, the White House said. —News item

Parody

The New York Ti

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2005

KING OF POP FACES GRUELING NOMINATION PROCESS ON HILL

CHILD WELFARE A PRIORITY

BY ADAM NAGOURNEY

NEVERLAND RANCH, Calif., Jan. 29 — In between racing go-carts and straddling ponies, music legend and accused pedophile Michael Jackson met with reporters to discuss his recent nomination as deputy secretary for Homeland Security. "I plan to heal the world. Make it a better place. For you and for me and the entire human race," said Mr. Jackson in his opening statement. Concerning what many pundits predict will be a rocky road to confirmation, the singer said he has faced much worse: "As long as the hearings don't involve full-body searches or pictures of my privates, I'm not worried."

Mr. Jackson was barraged by questions about child molestation charges and an impending indictment. "Why you wanna trip on me? Isn't it a Homeland Security secretary's duty to care for the prepubescent, knowing where they sleep and making sure they're all snug as a bug?" he asked. Even if an arrest warrant were issued after a successful confirmation, the singer insists he will not resign, describing his position as "too legit—too legit to quit." The remark fueled speculation that Mr. Jackson's speechwriter was either M.C. Hammer or Michael Gerson.

Asked how he would approach the war on terror, the singer made references to the videos for "Beat It" and "Bad." He also vowed to run DHS with a white-gloved fist and called Osama bin Laden "a smooth criminal."

The ten-minute press briefing was interrupted twice by a giraffe and an electric train operated by Emmanuel Lewis.

On Monday, President Bush spoke on the phone to Mr. Jackson, who invited the commander in chief to Neverland Ranch for a ride on the Ferris wheel, a trip to the children's petting zoo, and an audience with Bubbles, the chimpanzee Mr. Jackson plans on naming as his assistant secretary. The King of Pop also plans on bringing to Washington a staff of thirty, half of whom are close friends like Liza Minnelli and Elizabeth Taylor. The other half are mannequins.

Later in the conversation, when Mr. Bush explained he was a born-again Christian, Mr. Jackson recommended he try some of his "Jesus juice," citing

Continued on Page A8

Judge Chalk for the New York Times

Man in the Mirror: Mr. Jackson at his first press briefing as a nominee.

Blame U.S. for AIDS, Gout

ALEX RODRIGUEZ OUTED

the weekly Standard

FEBRUARY 7, 2005

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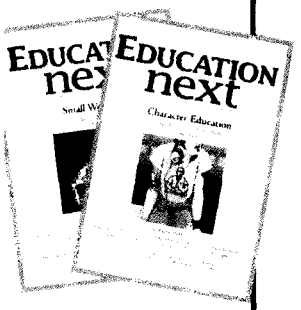

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In recent weeks, two separate r[illegible] international student performa[illegible] released. **The performance of [illegible] the United States has remained cons[illegible] the past three decades—dismal.** On the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) mathematics tests, U.S. fifteen-year-olds tied for twenty-seventh out of thirty-nine, outscoring students of such systems as Turkey, Mexico, and Tunisia. In 1995, on the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), U.S. students ranked in the top half of the distribution, which included more developing countries, but showed mixed performance gains compared to other nations taking the tests.

The usual response in the United States to announcements of such international results is to ignore them. After that, it is convenient just to explain them away: other countries test a more selective group of students, or the tests do not match our normal curriculum. Neither story is convincing, but with the general indifference to the results they do not have to be.

These results, however, should be taken very seriously. Research demonstrates that the skills measured on these tests are important in the labor market and have a substantial effect on national growth rates. Existing evidence indicates that the scores' importance to national growth is hard to overstate.

If the performance of U.S. students were to reach the middle of that of European students (still noticeably below the top), according to historical data, the U.S. economy could realize a half of 1 percent boost in its annual growth rate. Half of 1 [illegible] and lift this by $2,000 per person after just ten years. In fact, the United States has [illegible] its economic position by outstripping the rest of the world in growth over the twentieth century.

Of course, improving our schools takes time, as does observing the impact on the economy. If we improved our student performance over the next few years, it would have no immediately discernible affect. Students are not yet in the labor force, and it takes some time before the new, higher-skilled students become a substantial part of the nation's workers. But if the improvements sketched above could be achieved within twenty years, the growth dividend could cover *all* of our national K–12 expenditures by 2040.

Other nations, taking the results of international assessments seriously, have used their poor performance as a lever to bring about changes in their schools. **It is time for us to take our poor performance seriously.** Lots of things have been done to change schools over the past two decades, but they have not led to much overall improvement, which reinforces the idea that maintaining the current structure and simply doing more of it is unlikely to yield results. Instead, "radical" ideas such as results-driven accountability, expanded school choice, and stronger rewards for schools that improve on their performance are obvious ways to turn.

—Eric A. Hanushek

Eric A. Hanushek is the Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

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